Until The Day Breaks

by

Emily Spender

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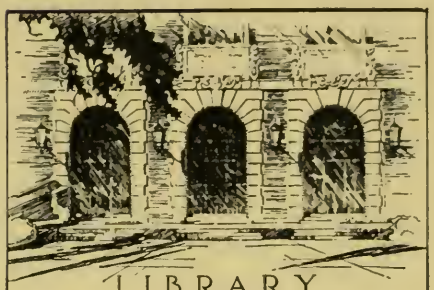

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UNTIL THE DAY BREAKS

BY

EMILY SPENDER

AUTHOR OF

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&c., &c.

"One equal temper of heroic hearts
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."
TENNYSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1886.

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UNTIL THE DAY BREAKS.

CHAPTER I.

A BIRTHDAY GIFT.

A SEPTEMBER morning in the West of England, dew sparkling on mossy lawns, a few yellow leaves scattered on the garden walks, beneath the sycamores and beeches, scarlet geraniums glowing in the sunshine, robins singing everywhere—and over all a sky of cloudless blue, an atmosphere calm and crystal clear. A grey stone,

squarely-built house of the last century stood in the old garden, and at one of the tall sash windows which opened down to the ground, and which now was thrown up as high as it would go, letting the sunshine and the fresh morning air fill the house—at one of these windows, there presently appeared a lady.

She was taller than the average of women, her figure was slight and peculiarly flexible; it had never known the bondage of steel and whalebone, but had grown agile and healthful as nature had intended it to be. She had wavy brown hair, skin of the clear softness seen to perfection only in the moist west country—a long, straight nose with finely chiselled nostrils, a small, firm, somewhat haughty mouth. Her dark grey eyes were singularly frank and guileless; no glance of coquetry had

ever shot from their sweet, thoughtful depths, they had the fearless, straightforward look one may see in the eyes of a pure-minded boy. To come down to more prosaic details—she wore a gown of cream-coloured cashmere made with the simplicity and the perfect fit of a Frenchwoman's, round her neck was a kerchief of India muslin and old lace, and a necklace of old-fashioned red coral beads.

She—Cecilia Tremayne—stood by the open window, and threw crumbs of bread with lavish hands to the crowds of sparrows, intermixed with a few graceful chaffinches, with slate-blue heads and salmon-coloured breasts, and timid brown hedge-warblers—which came to her every morning, summer and winter, for their breakfast. Presently down darted a robin, into the midst of the other birds, with

lordly airs scattering the vulgar sparrows to right and left, and then he hopped into the room as if it were his own.

Cecilia retreated from the window, smiling, and the robin followed her to the breakfast table, where the antique silver coffee-pot, and a 'dusky loaf which smelt of home,' and yellow clotted cream, and little dishes under silver covers awaited the master of the house. The robin alighted on the table, and after regarding it with his bright black eyes, and his head very much on one side, he pecked daintily at some butter which Cecilia offered him on a plate; then, as the door opened, he departed by the window with a satisfactory morsel in his beak.

There came into the room the Reverend Reginald Tremayne, vicar of the parish of Morwell, on the border of Dartmoor. He

had a look of the most perfect high breeding, a tall, spare, upright figure, silver hair, with a keen delicate, rather pallid face, like a carving in ivory. His grey morning suit and coloured necktie were anything but clerical.

Mr. Tremayne might value his position as vicar as bringing him a little more dignity and authority than he already possessed (if that were possible); but in his secret heart he hated his profession and all its works and ways. He had never married, and the mistress of his household, his sole surviving relative, was his niece Cecilia, the only child of his long deceased youngest brother Gerald.

Everything about the room had an old-world stateliness, and seemed to blend into a harmonious background for the two dignified human figures in it. A subdued

richness of colouring, dark polished oak floor, with here and here an Indian rug, dull red and orange brown in hue; walls of olive green, as restful to the eye as the shade of trees; a gleam of brass from an antique fender or mirror or candlestick; a dark blue Nankin china jar or two filled with dried rose leaves. On the table, the breakfast service was of old blue Worcester porcelain; the silver cream-jug was like a quaint little urn; the salt cellars had lion's heads and claws, and dated from the days of George II. The flowers, in bowls of antique, diamond-cut glass—flowers which give a touch of poetry to the prosaic business of eating and drinking—were roses mingled with maidenhair ferns.

Mr. Tremayne often said that he could not live, unless everything about him was

beautiful and dainty; but he, the most fastidious of men, was also one of the most abstemious. He trifled delicately with this dish and that, and left everything in his plate almost untouched. It was a necessity that old and precious wines should repose in his cool, cobwebbed cellars, but he did little more than touch the rim of his wine glass with his dainty lips.

This morning Mr. Tremayne looked at his niece with a peculiarly sweet smile—a smile that disclosed a fine set of white teeth, which he owed to nature alone.

'Cecilia, my dear, I have not forgotten what day this is. But I am not quite sure—' then an odd, mirthful, slightly perplexed glance shot sidelong out of his eyes. 'I am not quite sure whether the remembrance will be altogether welcome to you. Perhaps the time has now come—as it must

inevitably come to all ladies—when you would rather your birthday were forgotten.'

Cecilia looked up with her frank, straightforward glance, and smiled.

'I know quite well that I am thirty years old to-day, and I should not mind if the whole world knew it too.'

'If you had not such an inveterate prejudice against compliments, I could pay you a very pretty one, which is an honest one, too.'

'I suppose you mean, uncle, that I don't look my age? May I not return the compliment? But I think there is a conventional idea about women's ages, which comes partly from novels. Most of them are written for very young people. And so an unmarried woman is considered middle-aged at five-and-twenty, elderly at

thirty, and she ought to be dead and buried at forty.'

'Well, you never looked better in your life than you do now; I can tell you that, my dear. But as you are no longer conventionally young—however young you may be in reality—I think you may have one of the privileges of age, and wear diamonds.'

Mr. Tremayne placed in his niece's hand a leather case which contained a brooch and necklace of diamonds in antique silver setting. Cecilia was as delighted with her birthday gift as any young girl could have been; and her uncle gracefully acknowledged her thanks and exclamation of delight with a kiss on her forehead.

'They were your great-grandmother's, you know,' said the vicar. 'Do you wish

them re-set? They shall be, if you wish it.'

'No indeed, thank you, uncle. Anybody who has the money can go into a shop and buy a modern set of diamonds, but these in their pretty old-fashioned silver—why, everybody will know when I wear them that I am fortunate enough to have a great-grandmother.'

'I can always rely on your good taste,' answered Mr. Tremayne, with a gratified look. 'Modern jewellery has often a very *bourgeois* air.'

'Talk of living up to a tea-pot! It will be very much harder to live up to these diamonds,' laughed Cecilia. 'Especially with the original owner of them up there, looking down upon me. There are very few such women now-a-days;' and Cecilia glanced at the portrait of her

great-grandmother, which hung over the mantelpiece.

It was the picture of a fair and graceful young woman, in the costume of the last century, with a large muslin cap on her powdered hair, and a muslin kerchief round her neck. Her dark grey eyes were very thoughtful, the delicately-moulded lips were at once proud and tender. The chief characteristics of the whole face and figure were refinement and repose.

Pride of ancestry was the weakness of both uncle and niece; but whilst it led Mr. Tremayne to carry his head a little haughtily, it made Cecilia only depreciate herself.

'What a falling off is here!' thought she, when she compared her face in the looking-glass with her great-grandmother's portrait. Still she was conscious that in

order to bring back the calm and gracious dignity of that type of face, one must bring back also the leisure, the slow movement, the very dulness of life in the last century. On Cecilia's own vivid, mobile face the present day, with all its keen and varied interests, its swift rush of events, its development of human knowledge in ever widening circles—on Cecilia's face the present day had set its mark.

'I wish I had a portrait of my own mother,' said Cecilia, suddenly. 'It seems so strange that I should have no idea what she was like. If you could only tell me something about her——'

Cecilia did not look at her uncle as she spoke. She knew by past experience that for some undiscovered reason it annoyed the vicar to hear any mention of her mother's name.

'As I have told you before, Cecilia, I know nothing about your mother.' One would scarcely have recognised Mr. Tremayne's voice, so suddenly hard and stern had it become. 'I never saw her before your father married her, and they went out to Ceylon not long afterwards. You are a true Tremayne, my dear;' and the vicar tried to smile, but the fine wrinkles of vexation were not quite smoothed out from his forehead. 'Ah! here are the letters,' he said—with a sudden look of relief as if turning away from a distasteful subject—as the servant entered the room with letters on a silver salver.

Breakfast being over, Cecilia left the room, locked up the diamonds in her jewel-case, and then went out into the garden for her usual morning stroll.

Her thoughts returned, as they did

sometimes at long intervals, to the one mystery of her life. Why did her uncle Reginald always seem annoyed if she spoke of her mother? Why did he invariably answer Cecilia's inquiries about this unknown parent of hers in a manner which stopped further questioning? The very obstinacy of the vicar's silence provoked suspicion that he was not telling the literal truth when he said he knew nothing about her.

But, whatever the mystery was, Reginald Tremayne alone possessed the clue. Cecilia's father and mother were dead, and the secret had died with them. There was not another member of the Tremayne family from whom she could seek enlightenment. Cecilia's earliest recollections were of Morwell Vicarage, with faint visions of the blue skies and grey olive-trees of

the South of France, where she had spent several winters in her early childhood in company with her grandmother, old Mrs. Tremayne. She could just remember the stately old lady, who had died when she was six years of age, and all that she had known of motherly love and tenderness was associated rather with Mrs. Evesham, who was her governess and the Vicar of Morwell's housekeeper. This Mrs. Evesham was a woman of gentle birth, of ideas and opinions in advance of her time, and of a strong, sweet nature. Cecilia owed it to her, in great measure, that her youth was one of almost unclouded happiness; and in after years Cecilia realised, more and more, the influence which Mrs. Evesham had had over her life.

The morning sunshine, which gardeners tell us is the most precious of all light for

the growth and vigour of vegetation, has its counterpart in human life. Happy those upon whom the warmth of love and tenderness has shone in their early years, who have been sheltered from frost and blight—from neglect, worry, and causeless thwarting. They have gained a store of animal spirits, of hopefulness, of sweet and wholesome blood in their veins, which will be a strong antidote to misfortune in all their later days. No afternoon sun of prosperity will ever atone for a childhood full of fear and anxiety, and that 'snubbing' which robs a sensitive nature of all healthy self-reliance.

For the last ten years Cecilia had been mistress of her uncle's household. It was a post which exactly suited her in some respects. She was a born ruler, she had that administrative ability with which a

very large number of women are endowed; she had a high ideal of what the beauty and order of every department of household life should be, and enough practical capacity to work out her ideal with fair success. She had common sense, which is merely the bringing of the reasoning power to bear upon little things. She had a passion for justice, and plenty of imaginative sympathy to enable her to put herself in the place of others. So it was that domestic life under her rule at Morwell Vicarage went on smoothly and silently, like oiled machinery. Her uncle was as fond and as proud of her as if she were his daughter; her servants adored her, and left her only when they married.

She often longed for a wider, freer life, and higher and more vivid interests than her home in a country vicarage could give

her. Still she felt very happy this morning as she sauntered round the garden, with the sparrows and chaffinches flying round her, and the robin watching her with his bright, black eyes, and sometimes softly warbling, half-hidden in a laurel-bush.

Cecilia was thirty years old to-day, and most of the men she knew, would think she ought to be either dead or married. Even her uncle—though he would miss her every hour of the day, if she left his house—even her uncle had a slight sense of discomfort, almost of resentment, as at a slight upon himself, when he reflected that Cecilia had never had an offer of marriage. While the village girls, many of whom with their stout clumsy figures, and red, weather-beaten faces, looked ten years older than herself, would have called Miss

Tremayne an old maid, if they had known the date of her birth.

But Cecilia went down the garden walks smiling to herself, with the birds about her, and her small white hands full of flowers—creamy Gloire-de-Dijon roses, perfumed mignonette, and fuchsia with little crimson bells and bronze green leaves, which grows like a tree in the west country. She enjoyed life that sunny morning, though she was thirty years old —enjoyed it a great deal too much to wish for either death or marriage.

There is a beautiful old legend which Ouida tells 'how in the days of King Clovis, a woman, old and miserable and forsaken of all, strayed into the Merovingian woods, and lingering there, and hearkening to the birds, and loving them, and so learning from them of God, regained her youth;

and lived, always young and always beautiful, a hundred years; through all which time she never failed to seek the forests when the sun rose, and hear the first song of the creatures to whom she owed her joy.'

CHAPTER II.

CECILIA'S FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS.

THE Reverend Reginald Tremayne was sitting in his study that afternoon reading the last number of the *World*. It is said that the country clergy form the largest proportion of its readers. Cecilia passed the open window, and as the vicar looked up, she said,

'Can I do anything for you in the village? I am going to see old Mrs. Weston.'

'Oh, don't trouble yourself, my dear,'

replied her uncle, with a slightly fretful look. It was annoying to be interrupted in the reading of a mysterious scandal in high life by the mention of a farm-labourer's widow, and it was almost the only fault he had to find with his niece, that she was much too fond of pottering about amongst these wretched poor people. There were reasons, known only to himself, why this habit of Cecilia's was peculiarly distasteful to him.

'Don't trouble yourself about Mrs. Weston, she is in Marsden's parish, surely he and all his women folk can look after her. No, thank you, my dear, I want nothing in the village;' and, glad to forget for a time the odious subject of his parish, Mr. Tremayne returned to the fascinating paragraphs of the *World*.

Cecilia went on her way without reply-

ing. She had no intention of allowing anyone to interfere with her visits to such of the people of the neighbourhood as cared to see her, whether they lived in her uncle's parish, or in the next—St. Stephen's. Let the parsons make their professional visits to the poor; let them talk about the church, or about saving souls, according to their High or Low proclivities; let their wives and daughters give them tracts and lecture them on their shortcomings,—all that Cecilia cared about was to go and see these cottagers as their friend and equal.

Strict laws of etiquette ruled Miss Tremayne in these visits to the village folk. She never called upon them on a Monday, for that was their washing-day, or on a Saturday, when they scrubbed their floors. And if it was contrary to propriety

to call before lunch upon the wife of a neighbouring squire or parson—ladies who had their pretty drawing-rooms always ready for the reception of visitors—surely it was more unpardonable to visit a poor woman in the morning, when she was hot and busy over her cooking or ironing, in her shabbiest gown, and her one room a kitchen. She, poor soul, could not say she was 'not at home,' but, however much worried and 'put about' she might feel, she was obliged to seem honoured and delighted at seeing the 'gentry' in her cottage, or they would call her insolent and ungrateful.

The large white gates of the vicarage grounds opened upon a lane bordered by walls of slates and earth, with vividly green ferns luxuriating in every crevice. Oak and ash trees met overhead, and the

road was a cool and shady bower of greenery. The lane led out upon a broad and open down, where heather and golden furze, and bracken with short fine grass, were the only vegetation. All around was a wide expanse of country. To the south, the fertile meadows, rich with trees, sloped softly towards the broad river Tamar, and the shining line of the English Channel. Northwards rose the lofty hills of Dartmoor, their crests crowned with grey piles of granite rock; purple shadows, green and golden gleams sweeping over those rugged slopes, which seem eternal in form, and ever-changing in colour.

There is something in a wild and solitary land like this, which appeals with a mysterious and irresistible force to certain minds. Nature is here her true self, the same as she has remained from immemorial

times. Untouched by civilization, unstained by man, she has retained her power to subdue and influence him. These wilds, which cannot be cultivated, which yield nothing for our material wants, are full of vital food for the imagination, are full of sympathy for strong, pure, freedom-loving natures, which hate the falsehoods and the fetters of conventional society.

'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.'

This was the refrain which sometimes sounded in Cecilia's ears, as she left the vicarage woods and gardens, and came out upon the open down, where the range of Dartmoor towered before her in the purple glory of sunset, in the peace unspeakable of a cloudless morning, or grey and chill in a winter twilight.

Her home faced the sunny south; trees

and evergreen shrubs sheltered it from rough winds; indoors were soft carpets, hot-house flowers, pictures, porcelain, talk of books and art—but sometimes she would feel suffocated, as in a too warm and perfumed atmosphere, sometimes she panted for the freedom, the keen, wild breath, the austere boundlessness of the moors.

Cecilia went along the grey high-road, and then turned into a lane which led to the village of St. Stephen's. As she came in sight of the first cluster of white-washed, slate-roofed cottages, she beheld coming towards her Mrs. Marsden, wife of the vicar of that parish. She was a fine specimen of that well-known class—the British matron. A tall and portly woman of fifty-five, upright as a grenadier, with hooked nose and much-developed chin,

with cold eyes, devoid of all expression except perhaps slight disapproval of things in general—such a woman is truly majestic on her 'native heath' as wife of squire or parson, and pillar of Church and State; but nowhere is she seen to such advantage as at the *table-d'hôte* of a foreign hotel, where she represents the British constitution, the Protestant religion, and all the other proprieties of life amidst a profligate and benighted people.

Mrs. Marsden gave Cecilia a frigid greeting.

'And were you going to see Weston, Miss Tremayne?' (Mrs. Marsden never condescended to give any prefix to the names of the lower classes.) 'Because really you need not trouble yourself about her. Mr. Marsden and I visit her at regular intervals, as of course it is our

duty to do, she being one of our parishioners.'

All unconsciously she was echoing Mr. Tremayne.

'Oh, yes,' replied Cecilia, with a certain sweet dignity which had gained for her the title of 'Serene Highness' from the younger members of the Marsden family, 'yes, I am sure you and Mr. Marsden would often visit Mrs. Weston as your parishioner. But, you see, I am merely her friend.'

Mrs. Marsden smiled loftily.

'Do you think you are likely to have quite a good influence on the lower classes, if you treat them as your friends and equals?'

'Would you not rather have them as friends than as enemies?' Cecilia answered, still with the unruffled gentleness

which had a most irritating effect upon the elder lady.

'My dear Miss Tremayne, pray, do not misunderstand me. Surely there should be a certain distance and reserve kept up in one's manner to poor people. Mr. Marsden and myself are strongly of opinion that this sort of friendliness and—and familiarity are likely to set a bad example and have a pernicious effect on the lower orders. There is quite enough want of respect to their betters, and proper subordination amongst them, as it is.'

'If Mrs. Weston wishes me to give up calling upon her, I will do so, at once. I think she is the person to decide whom she will see in her own house. For after all, you know, Mrs. Marsden, she is as much mistress of her cottage as you are of your vicarage.'

'She ought to be in the workhouse, that is the proper place for her,' said Mrs. Marsden, reddening angrily. 'I wish you good-morning, and am sorry that as you have no mother of your own, you will not listen to a kindly meant word of advice from me;' and with that the vicar's wife sailed away with an air of outraged propriety.

'Cecilia Tremayne is a most objectionable young woman,' she thought. 'With all her airs, and her pride, and her extravagance—think of her wearing a white cashmere gown and that exquisite old lace round her throat when she is poking about the cottages, I always keep my shabbiest things to put on when I visit the poor—with all her airs and her pride she is nothing but a low radical and little better than a downright infidel in

her notions, and it is all the more shocking when one considers what an aristocratic old family the Tremaynes are. I should just like to find out who Cecilia's mother was. I shall always believe there was a mystery *there*.'

Mrs. Weston's little white-washed cottage had a bush of fuchsia beside the door, and a bed of stocks, marigolds, red daisies, and other hardy flowers. Indoors, it was very picturesque. The large, open fireplace had peat and logs of wood smouldering on the hearth, and a narrow curtain of bright coloured chintz edged the high mantelshelf. Above gleamed brass candlesticks and ruddy copper pots and pans. The black oaken dresser, so often met within Dartmoor cottages, had its store of blue delf plates and tea-cups; the small-paned casement window had white dimity curtains

and geraniums on the window-sill. Mrs. Weston herself was a pleasant picture—an old woman with wrinkled rosy face, grey hair, white cap, and scarlet kerchief over her lavender print gown. She was partly paralysed, and unable to move from her chair without assistance. Her face lighted up as Cecilia entered, and there was no lack of respect in the hearty greeting on either side—Cecilia's respect for a long life of work and struggle, and patient endurance of illness and poverty and hardship; matched by Mrs. Weston's respect for refinement and cultivation and everything else which makes a gentlewoman.

'You'll find me a bit put about, Miss Tremayne,' said Mrs. Weston presently. 'That good lady, Mrs. Marsden has just been here, and left some tracts, and had some talk, but I can't hold to what she

says, no how. She as good as told me that my poor dear husband had gone to the bad place, because as you know, Miss Tremayne, he wasn't one as was given to go to church; he liked to take a bit of a stroll Sundays, and get a bit of fresh air, and look at the green fields, after being down in a copper-mine all the week. She says, Mrs. Marsden does, we shall none of us be saved if we don't believe what the parsons tell us, and it was all wrote down in what she calls the "Thansian creed," that long rambling thing as they reads in church, Easters and Christmases, I have heard him scores of times, but I could never make head nor tail to him. Now, do you think, miss, as my husband as never took a drop too much, nor said a bad word, nor did harm to any living creature, do you think he b'aint in heaven? Be-

cause, if he b'aint, I don't care about going there.'

Cecilia's grey eyes flashed.

'Has Mrs. Marsden been to heaven, that she can say so confidently who is, and who is not there? Your husband was a good man if there ever was one, and all goodness is everlasting and shall never die—at least such is my belief. I do not profess to know as much as Mrs. Marsden does. There are quite enough difficult things to do every day, and quite enough puzzling things going on around us, without our troubling ourselves about what we cannot see or know or prove.'

'That's true, sure enough, miss,' said the old woman, with a sigh.

'For instance,' Cecilia went on, speaking more to herself than to Mrs. Weston—'why have you been obliged to work so

hard all your life, sometimes when you were so tired and ailing that you could hardly stand? why have you been so short of money that you have always been obliged to go without almost all the pleasures and comforts of life, even now when you are old and helpless? And all the while there are thousands of idle people, with more money than they know how to spend, wasting and squandering every day what would give their fellow-creatures rest from the frightful struggle which wears them out long before they are old. It's an old story, just as old as Dives and Lazarus, only the horrible injustice of it all weighs more heavily on people's minds than it ever did before. And no amount of almsgiving makes matters any better; quite the contrary.'

'Well, miss, the world do seem all in a

muddle-like; but there—'tis well to be content with one's lot.'

'Is it well? is it the right thing to fold one's hands and be patient and resigned? It seems to me that all the good that has ever been done in the world has come through people being discontented, and saying, "This or that evil shall not go on?" I am only tiring you with this sort of talk. But it is such a relief to speak out sometimes all that is in one's mind. All my life I have been trying to make our home pleasant and comfortable and everything he likes, to my uncle, who has always been so kind and generous to me, and he little guesses what I really think and feel, for I am obliged to carefully keep it from him. It is like a story I heard once—somebody was admiring the Quaker ladies for being so calm and placid. "Ah!"

said one of them, "you little know how we boil inwardly."'

''Tis a pity you haven't a home of your own, Miss Tremayne;' and the old woman smiled significantly. ''Tis only in nature you should feel moped sometimes, living alone with your old uncle.'

Cecilia laughed.

'Why, have not I a home of my own already? Do you think if I were married I should be even as free as I am now? Better be an old man's darling than a young man's slave—you know the proverb. And I do think my uncle is fond of me, though I daresay I am rather a disappointment to him in some ways.'

'To be sure,' said Mrs. Weston, who held those depreciating views of matrimony which are common amongst the experienced, even though they urge the single

to fetter themselves. 'To be sure, miss, you're best off as you are. If girls weren't so ignorant and so foolish, there wouldn't be many of them as 'ud marry at all. The best husbands be but plagues at times;' and the widow forgot that she had declined heaven without hers.

'I wish,' said Cecilia, musingly, 'I knew a little more about my father and mother. You have lived here all your life, Mrs. Weston, cannot you remember hearing anything about them?'

'No, miss, I don't know as ever I did. I mind your coming to the vicarage with a nursemaid, quite suddent-like, and everybody wondered at a bachelor gentleman like Mr. Tremayne, and an old lady like his mother, caring to trouble themselves with a little girl. I heard tell as how your father, the vicar's brother, had gone

out to the Ingies, but I never heard no word about your mother. Folks thought as how she was dead, and that's why your uncle and your grandmother took to you, and brought you up; and then, when old Mrs. Tremayne died, that good lady, Mrs. Evesham, went to live at the vicarage, and now she's dead and gone too, and I am sure I don't wonder you feel a bit lonesome, Miss Tremayne.'

'My father died in Ceylon, I know; but is my mother dead too, do you think?'

'What does your uncle say?'

Mrs. Weston discreetly parried the question. She had her own ideas on the subject—ideas she had no intention of revealing to Miss Tremayne.

'Oh! my uncle says she is dead,' Cecilia replied, a little hurriedly.

An uncomfortable suspicion would cross

her mind that the vicar had never told her the whole truth about her parents.

'Then, miss, I should certainly rest content with that, if I was you.'

Mrs. Weston thought to herself:

'The old parson can be as artful as a fox when he has a mind to, and, if it suits him to make out her mother is dead, Miss Tremayne is not likely to get the better of he.'

Soon afterwards Cecilia rose to go, and the old woman and the young lady parted, each feeling a little refreshed by a breath of different life and surroundings from her own.

CHAPTER III.

A PATRIOT OF OUR OWN DAY.

Miss Tremayne returned to the high-road, and pursued it for another quarter of a mile. Facing her there rose a hill, with scattered white cottages and garden patches on its lower slope; higher up, the cultivated fields gave place to heather and open moorland. One house there was, in this little hamlet, larger and of different aspect to the rest. It stood by itself in a paddock where a black and white cow was grazing; a slight iron railing separated the

paddock from a lawn and flower-borders, wherein bloomed glowing dahlias and geraniums. On one side was a plantation of firs which had a troubled and wind-swept existence in the winter. The house was of greystone with slated roof, it had a large bow-window and a deep porch with glass door and sides, forming a little conservatory, and full of flowering plants. Bleak and bare as the place was, it was also so airy and sunny that it gave one a pleasant and healthy sensation to look at it.

Just as Cecilia came in sight, a lady walked down the path which led across the paddock to the little iron gate which opened on to the high-road. She was a beautiful woman of forty or thereabouts, who had the grace and distinction of one of Gainsborough's portraits. And Nature

had bestowed upon her all the picturesqueness which comes from powdered hair; for some years ago, when she had fallen ill of malarious fever on the continent, her abundant dark brown hair had turned silver-grey. Her complexion was still brilliant; her violet blue eyes could belong to only one nationality. But, though she was born in the county of Cork, the name she bore now was not Irish. She was the wife of Eccleston Rivers, M.P. for an English borough.

Mrs. Rivers came towards Cecilia with both hands extended, smiling with a certain archness. She had the brightest manner, the sweetest laugh; yet a look sometimes crossed her face which revealed that she had passed through the most intense anxiety, grief, and even horror. Possibly the malaria of Italy was not the

sole cause of that deadly illness which had assailed her nearly seven years ago.

A vivid look of joy flushed Cecilia's face.

'Kathleen!' she exclaimed, 'when did you come? Ah, why did you not tell me you were here?'

All the passionate love and devotion that Cecilia had ever felt in her life were lavished on this, her woman-friend.

'I arrived only last night. It was too bad of me not to write to you, Cecilia, but I have been so busy—Mr. Rivers has gone to America again for a few weeks. I saw him off at Queenstown, then I came down here straight from Holyhead. I suppose you had my last letter saying I expected to be here some time this month?'

'Yes, but I had not hoped to see you so soon.'

'Had the letter been opened in the post-office, as usual?' asked Mrs. Rivers, with a slight scornful smile.

'Yes,' replied Cecilia, with a look of disgust, 'and clumsily gummed down again, also as usual. The detectives did not get much for their pains.'

'No, I should hardly venture to entrust any important letter to the post-office.'

Cecilia looked at her friend with wistful, passionate eyes. Mrs. Rivers lived in a world into which she herself was permitted only an occasional and tantalizing glimpse. She was not only the wife of a member of Parliament, and knew everything that happened the night before it was in the papers, and could feel as much proprietary interest in the House of Commons as a bishop's wife does in her cathedral. But she lived in a world which had

links with all the patriots of history. Her friends and associates could claim kinship with all who have struggled to free a nation from an alien yoke—with Deborah and Gideon and the Maccabees—with Joan of Arc and William Tell and Kociusko—with the Greeks of 1820, and the Hungarians and Italians of our own time.

'You have been very busy lately,' repeated Cecilia, 'your time is always occupied—and here am I, leading a narrow, useless life, unable to do anything for the cause I have most at heart. And it is all the harder for me, because I am English, Kathleen. You can have no idea what it is to be in my position, shut out from sympathy—my mind on fire with thoughts I dare not utter. Whatever you and your friends have to bear, you can uphold and

sympathize with each other—you have no shame to bear as I have—better be one of the oppressed than one of the oppressors!'

For, as Cecilia felt bitterly, 'Italy for the Italians!' was a cry that once stirred English hearts. English eyes have shed tears for the wrongs of Poland. English throats have cheered wildly for Kossuth and Garibaldi. But when England itself stands in the place of Austria or Russia—ah, *then* Englishmen regard an 'oppressed nationality' from a totally different point of view.

'Kathleen, tell me, is there nothing I can do?' and Cecilia fixed her eyes on her friend with a look of almost despair.

Kathleen met that look with deep tenderness, and yet there was something baffling in it, something which softly put Cecilia by. It was as if Mrs. Rivers took

the imploring hand held out to her, and clasped it lovingly; and yet held Cecilia at a little distance from her, and never allowed her to come very near.

'You have given sympathy to our national cause, you have given money to our starving people, do you call that nothing?'

'Nothing,' replied Cecilia, in a heart-broken voice; her eyes fell and she turned away in silence.

Mrs. Rivers was greatly touched, and she took a sudden resolution.

'I will tell her my secret,' she thought. 'Why not? It would harm no one but myself if all England knew it.'

'Cecilia mavourneen, don't look so "wisht," as your Cornish folk say. You are Cornish, are you not? a true Celt. I think most of the characteristics one has

ever heard of as belonging to the Celtic race, may be found in you.'

'Yes, the Tremaynes are Cornish,' replied Cecilia, absently; for once she was not interested in her ancestors.

'But there is one trait which our enemies tell us we have, in common with the French —which you certainly have not. You do not love to be ruled by a strong hand, do you? Well, if you will come with me this afternoon, you will see the English Government at work.' Then suddenly Mrs. Rivers' face changed from the half-bantering expression it had worn to a severe gravity. 'Cecilia, I am going to drive to Princetown this afternoon. I want you to come with me. The pony-carriage is at the door.'

They drove for miles, at first through a fertile wooded valley, and then they

gradually left all sign of cultivation behind them, and came upon the wild and open moorland. The road was unfenced, on either side granite boulders had in far off ages been tumbled about the hill-side, and lay like flocks of sheep amidst the short grass, and rushes, and heather.

The two friends slowly wended their way up a long hill, and now and then they turned round to behold the fair and shining prospect that lay behind them, which every minute grew vaster in expanse. Below the moorlands there lay meadows of a vivid green, softly rounded hills and woods of oak-trees, a gleam of the broad Tamar, whilst far away, faintly visible in a sunlit haze, rose the rugged outline of the Cornish moors.

But now the summit of the hill was gained, a corner of the road was turned,

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and at once a widely different scene was outspread. It was the very heart and citadel of Dartmoor. The hills stood all round the horizon like a fortification of nature's own building—grassy ramparts crowned with piles of granite. The sun still shone, but so grave and sombre were the grey and purple hues of the long sweep of moorland, that they seemed to absorb his rays and quench his brightness. Something stern and ominous was in the very air, so one might have fancied. And there, a little below the road—there as a grim and terrible fact—stood Dartmoor Prison—a great, greystone building, pierced with a multitude of small windows like a factory—or rather, a collection of buildings, enclosed within a gigantic wall. Around the prison, the moors stretched on and on, vast, unbounded, like an ocean;

overhead was a broad expanse of sky; nature was never freer, more untamed than here—here, where man was a slave.

As they neared the ponderous granite gateway of the prison, Cecilia saw a group of men breaking stones beside the road. Each was dressed in a grey cap, jacket, and knickerbockers spotted with marks like arrow-heads,—a costume that was at once sinister and grotesque. By their side stood a warder in dark-blue uniform, with a rifle over his shoulder, who looked half soldier, half policeman.

Mrs. Rivers gradually slackened her ponies' pace, till, as they neared the group of convicts, the little carriage proceeded merely at a walk.

'Do not speak, do not ask me any questions,' she said, hurriedly, under her breath.

Cecilia's heart beat faster, conscious that something of vital importance to her friend was about to happen. She saw that there was a look of strained eagerness, of intense expectancy on Kathleen's face, and the hand which held the ponies' reins trembled visibly.

And now one of the men looked up from his heap of broken granite and gazed straight at the two ladies. Generally, the convicts, in their ghastly grey clothing, resembled each other, like the sheep in a flock. But this man was a startling exception to the rest. He was tall and muscular in figure, with most refined and regular features; his face was worn and deadly pale, yet still youthful; something in his look seemed familiar to Cecilia—but all passed in one moment; she was con-

scious only of the man's white, eager face, and the passionate gaze of his dark-blue eyes.

The carriage crept slowly on—there was one look between the two, between the convict breaking stones beside the road, and Kathleen Rivers, the beautiful, richly dressed woman in her dainty equipage, with its sleek pair of ponies and plated harness—one moment when their eyes devoured each other, one moment into which was concentrated an agony of emotion—then the carriage went on, and the convict bent over his work again.

Not a word was spoken between the two women until they were out of sight of the prisoners. Then Kathleen Rivers turned to her companion, with a vivid light in her eyes and a flush on her cheek, a look in

which a lofty pride and love seemed to triumph over mortal anguish.

'Cecilia,' she said, 'that was my brother.'

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONVICT'S STORY.

The two women drove some distance beyond the prison before they exchanged another word. Then Mrs. Rivers turned to Cecilia with a face that was still very pale, and had a sort of terrible triumph in it.

'There, Cecilia, you have seen for yourself what may happen in England to a man who has tried to free his country. They are not all fêted and cheered as Kossuth and Garibaldi were.'

'Oh! Kathleen,' said Cecilia, in a voice half choked with emotion, her eyes full of blinding tears, 'I never knew—I never dreamt of this.'

'Yes,' Mrs. Rivers went on, 'it is all very romantic to read about Polish and Italian patriots in their dungeons. It seems to bring it more home to one, it makes one feel what suffering for one's country really means, when one sees one's own brother in that convict's dress.'

'Kathleen,' and Cecilia's hands went up to hide her face, 'you ought to hate the very sight of me, an Englishwoman. I shall never dare talk to you again about Ireland. My words must seem a mockery. How little I knew—how little I knew!'

'Dear girl,' replied Kathleen, very tenderly, 'you are one with us in heart and sympathy. I have shown you how fully I

trust you by bringing you here to-day. And now I know you want to hear my brother's story, though you do not like to ask me to tell it you.'

'Indeed, I do want to hear it,' was Cecilia's fervent answer.

'Well, to begin with, you know both my father and mother belonged to families in whom patriotism was a tradition. My father, Mr. O'Donovan, was a Catholic, his family had suffered terribly in '98; my mother was a Protestant, and her father had been a friend of Lord Edward Fitzgerald's. According to a compact made between my parents, and most honourably carried out, I was brought up in my mother's faith. My earliest recollections are of the horrors of 1847, when the people around us were dying by thousands of hunger, and their corpses lay by the road-

side. My father and mother worked night and day, trying to save these poor creatures, and they braved the fever which followed the famine when their neighbours were fleeing to England. But my mother's heroism did not save her. She died of the fever after a few days' illness. My father was a nearly broken-hearted man; but he struggled on, devoting himself to the cause of the people; and, though he took no active part in the rising of '48, he did good service by sheltering several refugees, and helping them to escape to America.

'Some years afterwards he married a Catholic lady, and she was the mother of my only brother Maurice. She was the best of mothers to us both, and I can never praise half enough her tenderness and the honourable manner in which she,

as well as my father, abstained from all interference with the religious opinions in which I had been brought up. Of all people in the world, I think Irish Catholics are at once the most devout and the most tolerant.

'Well, Maurice grew up as ardent a Nationalist as the rest of our family. We placed all our hopes on him; my father's failing health prevented his taking any part in politics himself, but he hoped that his son would fight for his country in the House of Commons. That was the only sort of fighting which he believed was possible for Ireland. Fortunately for himself, he did not live to see the Fenian rising—the wild hopes, the bitter disappointment, and the tremendous vengeance of the Government. My brother Maurice was then about two-and-twenty, clever,

handsome, with charming manners—just the young man to be popular in society. He was studying for the Irish bar, and he might have been living in Dublin now, a rising barrister, if he had not taken the losing side. His was just one of those natures which is ready to dare and suffer everything for the cause of freedom—such a nature, in fact, as those of the Polish, Hungarian, and Italian patriots whom Englishmen admire so much. I believe in '66 and '67 he went through mental torture—he longed to take up arms for Ireland, yet all the time he believed that those who did so would bring only fresh disasters on their country. But what could you expect from a young and ardent man of two-and-twenty? I think he at last joined the rising with much of the same feeling with which English soldiers

must have ridden in that famous Balaclava charge—"some one had blundered;" there was nothing but death ahead for most of them, still not to fight when the others did would be impossible dishonour.

'For some time after the outbreak had been put down, Maurice was unsuspected and untouched. He did not attempt to escape; he went back to our old home near Cork, and there he stayed, studying his law-books, and calmly waiting for the doom which he felt sure would fall upon him in the end. His mother and I implored him to fly to America. "Let them take my life if they will," was his answer. "It will be only a just atonement for the blood that has been fruitlessly shed."

'The end came at last. It was grey dawn in the early summer when I was awakened by a loud knocking at the door.

In a moment I knew what it meant. I sprang up and looked out of window. The lawn in front of the house was full of armed police. I think they imagined that some desperate resistance would be made. I rushed to my brother's room, where I found him in a profound and quiet sleep. I awoke him, I frantically implored him to try to escape.

'"It is useless," he answered, calmly. "You will find the house is surrounded. This is what I foresaw from the first; why struggle against it? We played a hopeless game." Then he asked me to arouse his mother whilst he dressed himself. In a few minutes we three went downstairs together, and Maurice threw open the hall-door and surrendered himself.

'Oh, Cecilia, when they had taken him from me and his mother—he was her only

son, and she was a widow—she and I clung to each other and thought of the garden of Gethsemane, and the soldiers bearing away One who made no resistance —Ah me! you English—no, not you, not you, dear, but your countrymen——what blasphemy would my words seem in their ears!——But if ever a stainless martyr was nailed to a cross, my Maurice has been crucified these seven long years! Think of him as you saw him to-day, the refined and chivalrous gentleman, chained to those men, the vilest in the kingdom, thieves, murderers, loathsome ruffians!—Oh, Maurice, my brother, my only brother!'

Kathleen Rivers burst into passionate weeping, and for some minutes the two women clasped each other's hands, and shed tears together. But Mrs. Rivers,

long used to self-repression, soon recovered her calmness, and she said to Cecilia, with a smile which was sadder than her tears,

'Do you wonder *now* that my hair is grey?'

'Of course,' she went on presently, 'my life ever since has not been all sadness. My husband's love and perfect sympathy would have made me very happy, if I could have been happy whilst Maurice was being tortured. Many of my friends have wondered how I could have borne to marry an Englishman. But you know that Mr. Rivers is one of those few noble members of Parliament who have striven for the cause of Ireland almost as if they were Irish born; and of course they have in consequence lost all chance of any kind of office. My husband

is, in any case, too much of a Radical to find favour with the Government; what little influence he has, he uses without ceasing to get my brother released. But as yet we see no hope of success.'

'And what was his exact sentence?' asked Cecilia, in a low voice.

'Ten years' penal servitude. He thought it worse than death.'

'Did you never think about trying to contrive his escape?'

Cecilia glanced about her a little apprehensively as she spoke, for the very walls might have ears.

'There is nothing I would not try to do; but every effort of mine would be hopeless, for the simple reason that he would refuse to avail himself of it. He said to me, when I saw him in prison just before his trial,

"If I am convicted, as I certainly shall be, and if my sentence is penal servitude instead of death, let no one trouble themselves about planning an escape for me. In the first place, I believe no prisoner yet has ever succeeded in making good his escape from Portland or Dartmoor; it is not like it was in the old Australian days. No, I shall be resigned to my sentence, whatever it may prove. I engaged in a struggle which was hopeless from the beginning; what could a few poorly armed, half-disciplined men do against all the armies of England? She could crush us with her little finger. But I was ready to die then, I am ready to die now, rather than stand idly by, when other men were laying down their lives for Ireland."

'It was said so like an Irishman,

was it not, Cecilia?—a generous, chivalrous, illogical Irishman! But many and many a night I have lain awake planning schemes for his escape. I believe it might be done. Sometimes one of these Dartmoor fogs come on suddenly, when the prisoners are out of doors at work. Not a yard before you can you see, and that is the time when one or two of the convicts have escaped; but they have always been re-taken, because they were known by their convict's clothes. Now, if I were somewhere at hand, waiting for him in some hiding-place, with a suit of ordinary clothes for him to put on in exchange, the great difficulty of escaping would be overcome. Of course I would have to contrive some means of letting him know the place where I was waiting for him, and then how would he find

me in the fog? Certainly he could not do it without my conveying to him beforehand a mariner's compass.'

'Kathleen, do you think it is impossible?' cried Cecilia, with kindling eyes.

'Quite impossible. Maurice has some fantastic notions of honour, as I have told you, and he would refuse to accept his liberty if I were implicated. Assisting a convict to escape, is felony, my dear, as you may read in the placard hung up outside the prison gateway. I would not hesitate at felony or anything else, myself, but unfortunately Maurice declines to assist me. Now you know why I have taken Morwell Lodge, and why I often drive to Princetown. It is not with any hopeless scheme of helping Maurice to escape. Twice or three times every year I have been allowed by the authorities to

have a short interview with Maurice in the prison. There are iron bars between us, and a warder always present, and we are not allowed to speak of our country, or any public affairs. But you can partly imagine what these few brief minutes are to my brother and me. Then sometimes, at long intervals, I am fortunate enough, as I drive past the prison, to see him at his work, and we are able to exchange one silent look, as we did to-day. Of course this does not often happen. I may come here a dozen times and not see him; he may be kept at work within the prison walls. But to-day I had a strong presentiment that we would meet, and this is why I asked you to come with me. I felt the time had come for me to tell you all, and trust you fully.'

'And now, Kathleen, you know,' was

Cecilia's earnest answer, 'that if ever the time should come when you are able to somehow contrive your brother's escape, you may rely upon my giving you all the help that is in my power to give. I shall be just as ready as you are to run the risk of being sent to prison.'

'Dear Cecilia,' said Mrs. Rivers, smiling sadly, 'I only wish that all our own people were as ardent in our country's cause as you are. Ireland would have been free long ago. The time may come when I'll call upon you to do something for us, but as for my brother's escape, all attempt in that direction he has barred himself. Meantime all you can do for me is to drive with me to Princetown. Heaven only knows what I go through on these expeditions—the agony of suspense as I near the prison, the sickening disappointment when

I meet dozens and dozens of prisoners, and he is not among them, or else living a whole lifetime in the few moments when we actually see each other. But to look into each other's faces, and not to be allowed to speak—can you conceive the torture of it? Still if you will come with me, Cecilia, your true sympathy will a little deaden the pain I suffer all these weary miles.'

'I will come, Kathleen: you may always depend upon me.'

'I mean to remain at Morwell Lodge until Mr. Rivers returns to England, which will be just before Christmas; so I may make many demands upon your time, Cecilia.'

'Tell me, where is Mrs. O'Donovan, your brother's mother?'

A strange look passed over Kathleen's

face, a mingling of pain and enthusiasm.

'She lived on, for a few months after her son's trial and conviction, the life of a Sister of Charity, devoting part of her time to the sick and poor, and the rest to prayer—in her patience, charity, and devotion like one of the saints of old Irish days. Her health had long been delicate, and, in less than a year after the loss of her son, she peacefully passed away. They sentenced her to death when they convicted Maurice. But, mercifully, she never realised the indignities which have been heaped upon her only son. I know something of how the Government have tried to plunge him into the lowest depths of degradation. But degrade his mind and soul they never can.'

The two women parted that day with one fervent clasp of the hand, one tender

kiss. It was as if they had partaken of some solemn, awful sacrament, which had bound them together, and to the noble army of martyrs all over the world, in a mystical fellowship of suffering.

CHAPTER V.

THE MARSDENS.

The village of St. Stephen's lay in a hollow of the hills. A few whitewashed cottages with slated roofs clustered round a grey church tower. Above rose hills, bare, except for furze and heather, and crowned with granite rocks. But, though so near the moor, St. Stephen's was embowered in trees. There was an avenue of sycamores in the churchyard; each farmhouse had its own little wood around it, and the vicarage was almost hidden in foliage. For, to gain

luxuriant vegetation in the west country, all you need is shelter from the wild sea-winds which sweep it on three sides; for scorching summer heat and winter snow are both almost unknown. So ferns grow like a little tangled forest in all the high-banked lanes, and flowers are rampant in low-lying cottage gardens.

The vicarage of St. Stephen's was an ordinary looking modern house, with fairly kept lawn and shrubberies. Indoors, comfort was somewhat sacrificed to an ecclesiastical appearance; but no clergyman who wore stiff round collars which galled his neck, and cassock which impeded his limbs, would complain of early English fire-places which smoked, and straight-backed and uncomfortable oaken chairs.

However, two young ladies, who were sitting in the dining-room one morning,

were by no means inclined to take mediæval and ascetic views of life. Harriet Marsden, the vicar's eldest daughter, was, what is commonly called, a fine-looking woman. 'Everything comes to him who waits;' and Harriet, who all her early youth had felt the possession of a low forehead, a turned-up nose, a wide mouth, and high shoulders to be her heavy cross, now found herself in the fashion. For the rest she was tall, had a bright colour, dark and expressive eyes, and luxuriant black hair.

It was a trial to both the sisters that the second, Janet, should so decidedly look the elder; somehow, it made each of them appear older than she was. But—as Mrs. Marsden said—it could be 'managed,' and everything in this world can be managed.

There must be an air of deferring to Janet's superior wisdom and experience, as if she were in reality the senior; and she must be 'put forward' when there was a school treat, when some uninteresting married people were coming to dinner, or on any other dull occasion.

Janet, who sat the other side of the fire-place, dutifully darning stockings, was in every way a contrast to her sister Harriet. She was small and slight, with pretty little features, but with a sickly complexion and scanty flaxen hair. Everything about her was precise and trim. 'A born old maid,' thought her mother, in anguish, witnessing Janet's neat, orderly ways; Janet never ran into debt like Harriet, but made the best of her meagre allowance, and—what was almost fatal—

Janet fondled and made a fuss over the household tabby. For it seems generally supposed that the qualities of order, economy, and kindness to animals disqualify women for married life.

The two sisters were enjoying a grumble together this morning, and the immediate cause of their low spirits was a tennis-party at Morwell Vicarage, to which they were going to-morrow afternoon.

'How I hate tennis!' sighed Janet. The good old days of croquet were gone for ever; when one could dawdle about a whole afternoon without exertion, and carry on a delightful conversation with a curate, scarcely interrupted now and then by having to wield a mallet, or display a pretty foot on a ball. Now all was changed. Janet had neither the strength nor the inclination for hopping violently, and

dodging after an obtrusive ball, on which one must keep one's eyes, instead of on the curate.

As for Harriet, she had learnt that one cannot have all the good things of life at the same time. By desperate exertions she had succeeded in gaining a small waist, but she was not able to play tennis without gasping, and getting terribly red in the face, until one day her father had made one of his characteristic speeches.

'I think you look rather less repulsive when you are sitting still, Harriet, than you do when you are playing tennis.'

'I positively have nothing to wear to-morrow afternoon,' sighed Harriet.

She rose, yawning and stretching her plump arms, and walked to the window, where she stood looking dolefully into the garden.

At that moment the door opened, and there entered a boy of eighteen, very tall and pale, and slender, with dark hair and eyes, and keen, regular features. He was Clive Marsden, the vicar's only son.

'Oh, Clive, is that you?' Harriet turned, her face brightening with a sudden thought. 'I want you so much to do something for me. I must have a new tennis apron for the Tremaynes' party to-morrow; just draw me one of your awfully lovely patterns, there's a good fellow. I have some stuff that will just do; Janet, you are such a quick worker, I am sure you could get it done in time. It must be just an outline pattern, you know, Clive.'

'You are a nice slave-driver,' replied Clive, laughing. 'However, if Janet does not mind her lion's share of the work, I am sure I need not. Here, get your piece

of stuff, Harriet, I'll do it in five minutes.'

'Oh, Janet won't mind, of course,' replied Harriet, serenely, as she went towards the door; 'I could never do needlework, but it just suits Janet's style.'

'Really, Janet,' said Clive, when the elder sister had left the room, 'why do you let Harriet put upon you as you do?'

Janet looked up from Harriet's stockings, which she was darning.

'Oh, my dear Clive, I like doing things for Harriet, of course I do; it is most important for her and for all of us that she should look as nice as possible. And besides, you know,' she added, in a mincing tone, 'it is a woman's place to deny herself for other people.'

Clive had an odd smile as he seated him-

self at the table, and began idly sketching with pen and ink upon a sheet of paper.

'I'll tell you what, Janet, you are just one of those unselfish persons who are a perfect curse to a family. By your always giving up your own wishes and your own claims, you make the rest of us selfish, inconsiderate beasts. It is all your own fault, for being so confoundedly self-denying.'

Here Harriet returned with a piece of cream-coloured linen in her hand, and she laid it on the table before her brother.

'There, Clive, now draw me one of your awfully nice designs, anything you like, only do it as quickly as you can.'

'I don't believe you would know or care if it was ever so badly done,' he re-

plied, discontentedly. However, he drew with pen and ink on the linen rapidly, boldly, his delicate fingers never hesitating, a design of blackberry leaves, blossom, and fruit; all 'out of his own head,' as his sisters said; no model before him, but produced from the inexhaustible store of his observations of nature. He threw his whole heart and soul into his work, although it was done for one who had no eyes to appreciate the beauty of nature or art, and who wanted only 'something to wear.'

Harriet sat in her straight-backed, ecclesiastical-looking arm-chair, yawning and turning over the pages of a novel, too lazy to read it. Janet went on with her darning, until the tennis-apron should be ready for her to work upon it. Presently, her mind still running upon the

party at Morwell Vicarage, Janet said, meditatingly,

'I wonder what gentlemen there will be at the Tremaynes.'

'For heaven's sake, Janet!' cried Clive, impatiently, 'don't talk like a milliner's girl! Why can't you say *men?*'

'I was only referring to the gentlemen we might meet at Morwell vicarage,' replied Janet, meekly.

'People in society never say "gentlemen," you know that;' and Clive hastily dashed away at his design, as if working off his disgust. 'You should have been with me at Princetown the other day, when I went into the Duchy hotel to get some lunch—there were two awful women there having tea, without an H between them, two greengrocers' wives out for the day, I should think; they talked

of some one as a "party" (you'll do that next, I suppose, Janet), and said at last they supposed their "gentlemen" would be ready for them, and then I saw the "gentlemen"—oh, Lord !'—Clive's powers of description failed him here, and he drew a blackberry spray in silence.

'I don't suppose there will be anybody at the Tremaynes' but old fogies and dowdy girls,' said Harriet. 'I am sure I don't know why I am taking all this trouble about the tennis-apron.'

'Oh, Harriet, one never knows,' answered Janet, impressively, 'it is always worth while to try to look nice. One never knows. I shall always remember Mrs. Prior's story of going out to tea at Tavistock—they had evening tea-parties in those days, you know, when people went at six, and stayed till twelve, and had music and

round games at cards; well, you know Mrs. Prior said she did not expect to meet any gentlemen at all but an old general, and the rector, who had been married a dozen years—and there, that very evening, she met Mr. Prior for the first time, and six weeks afterwards they were engaged!'

'What would our life be without hope?' muttered Clive.

'I suppose you are going to-morrow, Clive?' asked Janet. 'It will be rather dull for you though, as you are not strong enough to play tennis.'

'Oh, the "divine Cecilia" is attraction enough for him,' said Harriet, with a little toss of her head. 'Really, Clive, I think it is awfully absurd the way you and Cecilia Tremayne go on: why, the last time we were at Morwell, when there was some-

body interesting there for a wonder, that Major Darcy from Plymouth—Cecilia talked to you ten times more than she did to him.'

'It is not for me to find fault with Miss Tremayne's taste,' answered Clive, drily, 'nor for you either, I should think, Harriet, seeing that Major Darcy was left free to devote himself to you.'

'But the worst of it was, he didn't. I suppose he was piqued by Cecilia's not paying him as much attention as he expected, for when I tried to make myself fascinating, he was downright uncivil. He was awfully good-looking, too, just the style I admire,' said Harriet, regretfully.

'Bah!' exclaimed Clive, kicking the leg of his table.

Here Mrs. Marsden sailed majestically

into the room. She had just finished her morning's interview with the cook, and she carried a bunch of keys in her hand, for everything in the household at St. Stephen's Vicarage was kept locked up, from the wine down to the pins and the postage stamps.

'How do you feel this morning, Clive?' she asked; the tenderest feeling in Mrs. Marsden's somewhat tough and worldly heart was kept for her boy.

He answered, a little impatiently,

'Oh, I am all right, thank you, mother.' To a lad of eighteen, second to the trial of weak health, is the trial of having it inquired about.

'You will be well enough to go to the Tremaynes to-morrow, I hope?'

'I was just talking about Cecilia Tremayne, when you came in, mamma,'

said Harriet. (Clive could not succeed in teaching his elder sisters to say 'father' and 'mother,' as it was the correct thing to do.) 'What an awfully odd girl she is!'

'*Girl* is hardly a suitable word to apply to Miss Tremayne,' replied Mrs. Marsden, loftily, 'I can remember her being grown up and "come out" when you and Janet were at school. That is a fact I take care to let all our friends know. It is not well to allow a youthful appearance to impose upon society.'

'If she was a dowdy-looking frump, I could understand it,' resumed Harriet, 'but Cecilia dresses well——'

'Most extravagantly,' so Mrs. Marsden interrupted, in a severe tone.

'Well, I suppose she can afford it; everyone says old Tremayne is awfully

rich. She is not like us poor wretches, who don't have a new dress once in three months; but, all the same, Cecilia is a regular old maid: never has what I call fun with gentlemen. If they try to get up a little flirtation with her, she looks at them in such a straightforward, cold-blooded sort of way, which shuts them up, of course. One would really suppose, from the way she goes on, that she likes ladies' society best! It is no wonder she is not married.'

'You see the result of Cecilia Tremayne's opinions, my dears,' said Mrs. Marsden, 'all her strong-minded, radical notions. She is perfectly careless what gentlemen think of her; I have heard her myself—when some one was running women down, just as gentlemen *will* do sometimes—I heard her snub the poor man so

that of course he was quite disgusted with her. And then her independent ways of going about are so unfeminine, never asking the advice of a married lady like myself, but appearing entirely to rely upon her own judgment.'

Clive did not cry 'Fudge!' like the immortal Mr. Burchell, as a refrain to his mother's remarks; but he was obliged to severely kick the table every minute.

'My dear girls, Cecilia Tremayne is a warning to you in every respect, and you ought to be thankful you have had me to train you for a woman's true sphere of home. A woman was meant to be a wife and mother, not to lead a free and independent life like Cecilia Tremayne, with nobody to interfere with her but a poor, silly old man like her uncle, who lets her do just what she likes.'

'I am sure, mamma,' replied Janet, dutifully, 'you have done your very best for us, and I quite agree with what you say about a woman's highest happiness, and I am sure I should never think of differing from a gentleman about anything; but still you see'—and a little pink flush came into Janet's modest face—'still it does not seem to make much difference, after all.'

'Here is the apron.' Clive rose abruptly, and held out the piece of linen, on which he had just finished tracing his design. 'You had better take it at once, one of you, or I shall throw the whole thing into the fire in another minute.'

The conversation was effectually turned, and some minutes were taken up with admiring the pattern, and with the consideration of the coloured silks to be used for

embroidering it. A little out of patience with Janet's slowness in deciding upon the right colours :

'Here,' Clive cried at last, 'give me a needle and a morsel of that green silk—that olive shade, don't you see? I will show you how it ought to be done.'

Clive's long, lithe fingers were just as deft with a needle as with a brush or pencil. He was running in the outline of a blackberry leaf, while his mother and sisters were interested beholders—not regarding the apron, as Clive did, as a work of art, but as an adornment to Harriet, and therefore a thing of solid, practical value—when the door opened, and the vicar of St. Stephen's entered the room.

CHAPTER VI

FATHER AND SON.

The Reverend Philip Marsden was a little younger than his wife, but with his scanty hair, his stooping gait, and the numerous crows'-feet round his dim, near-sighted eyes, he looked many years her senior. He was an ambitious man who had been disappointed, and disappointment had soured him for life. For what was the good of having been a Scholar of his college, what was the good of his prizes, his honours, his hard work, and the

golden opinions of his tutors—if it all ended in a little village in a hollow of Dartmoor, and four hundred pounds per annum ?

His first disappointment—the first check in his brilliant career—was his failure (always unaccountable to himself) in getting a fellowship. He had married a woman with a little money, but though she had made him an excellent wife, managing his household and his own peevish temper with praiseworthy skill, he had never loved her. He had declined the offer of a living in his younger days, because he had thought its value unequal to his merits ; and in the end he had had to put up with a much inferior one. As for his children—he looked from one to the other, with mingled disgust, anger, and despair. It was all very well in his

sermons to preach submission to the will of Providence, but in his secret heart he considered that Providence had behaved scandalously to a man of his attainments.

'Clive, are you there?' demanded his father, in a querulous tone.

The son reddened a little, and threw his work into Janet's lap as Mr. Marsden's near-sighted eyes peered at him. But it was too late. The vicar had mounted a pair of gold eye-glasses on his nose.

'Ugh!' he ejaculated in disgust, 'Hercules amongst the women, only he is *not* Hercules, but emphatically the reverse. You have been idle the whole of this week; are you aware of that fact?'

'It's not my fault,' muttered Clive.

The whole expression of the boy's face changed as his father addressed him. His

brow clouded, and he compressed his lips doggedly, as if he was determined not to be irritated into making any reply.

'Well, whether it is your fault or not, it is very much my misfortune to have an only son unable to work, always ailing, never out of the doctor's hands for more than a week or two together. I was a scholar of Oriel by the time I was your age, and my ambition has always been that my son should distinguish himself at Oxford. But Heaven knows! what with one thing and another, my ambition is pretty well crushed out of me. Well, will you come into my study, and try to do a little Homer this morning?'

'I will try,' answered Clive, gloomily.

'I don't know what is to become of you in the future; how you are going to earn

your living, such an invalid as you are,' was the vicar's remark, as he preceded his son into his study.

It was not very cheering to Clive's spirits—depressed as they usually were from long-continued physical weakness, and enforced abstinence from study and play, and all a boy's ordinary pursuits—it was not very cheering to feel that his father looked upon him in some way as a culprit, as though he were morally responsible for the lack of health which robbed his young life of all brightness.

Was it Clive's fault that he could not give an hour's attention to Greek or mathematics without its bringing on a headache which almost blinded him? did he like to be ignorant of things which all gentlemen's sons knew at his age? was it pleasant to know that as he had lost all

chance of going to a public school in the past, so he had no hope of going to Oxford in the future, no prospect of anything but being a burden to his family all his life? Mr. Marsden would return no direct answer to Clive's passionate inquiries, but went on grumbling at his own sad case in having a son who would never be a credit to him in any way.

In truth, Mr. Marsden had no one but himself to blame for his son's ill-health. As soon as Clive was born, the vicar, who had been lamenting his unhappy fate at being the father of three members of the useless and redundant sex (there was a good deal to be said in favour of the nations who practised female infanticide, so he thought), the vicar hailed the coming of the long delayed heir to his university honours. Clive was to carry on the

scholarly traditions of the Marsden family, and his father insisted on teaching him the Latin grammar as soon as he knew his letters. Clive was to get a scholarship for a great public school, and then in after years one for the university, as his father had done before him; and, for this end, Mr. Marsden determined to prepare the boy himself.

'They don't make little boys work at preparatory schools,' said the vicar, 'I will show him the way to succeed.' And the end of it was—just at the age when Clive should have gone to that public-school which his father destined for him—the over-taxed brain, which Nature meant for an artist's, and not a scholar's, the over-taxed brain gave way; and Clive went to death's door instead.

When the vicar entered his study with

his son, he found his youngest daughter, Lina, standing before his book-case, with a volume in her hand in which she was apparently absorbed. She was a fair and slender girl of twenty, with something in her frank, sweet, thoughtful face which reminded one of the portrait of Lady Jane Grey in the Bodleian Library. It is a type of face becoming much more frequent amongst young English womanhood.

'What do you want in my study, Lina?' asked the vicar, peevishly. 'I hate to see a girl of your age pottering about amongst books like an old blue-stocking.'

'Have you any objection to my borrowing this for a few days, father? I will take great care of it.'

Mr. Marsden put on his glasses, and peered at the book his daughter held out to him. It was Plato's Republic in the

original Greek. He uttered an exclamation of disgust, and let his glasses drop.

'Certainly not; if you *will* meddle with Greek, you must get books for yourself. I am not going to encourage you in your foolish pedantry. Come, Lina, leave my study if you please, it is no place for girls. Clive and I have work to do; that is, if I can get him to do an hour's work without taking to his bed after it.'

Lina said no more; but, as she left the study, she and her brother exchanged a look which meant perfect understanding of the irony of each other's fate.

For alas for nature's law of inheritance! Intellect is not always entailed in the male line. The father's capacity for scholarship had descended to his daughter, not to his son.

As Lina went into the dining-room, she heard Janet say, plaintively,

'I do wish papa would leave poor Clive alone. He has been a little better the last few days, and now that horrid Greek, or whatever it is he has to do, will make him as ill as ever again.'

'It is perfectly useless bothering the poor boy; if he can't study, it is not his fault,' added Harriet, who, like her sisters, was very fond of Clive; though she looked upon him as a poor specimen of the male sex. 'A man is nothing if he is not strong,' she thought; her ideal hero being a mixture of a soldier and a prize-fighter.

'As for wanting an ornament to the family,' Harriet went on, 'here is Lina. I am sure she ought to satisfy papa, with all her learning and certificates and things.'

Lina smiled.

'I am afraid that my having learnt anything is as much a grievance as Clive's *not* having learnt it. Father refused to lend me a book of his just now. I daresay Mr. Tremayne has it. I must try to get it from Cecilia.'

'And quite right of your papa,' replied Mrs. Marsden, sharply. 'We shall both of us do all we can to discourage your ridiculous notions. The idea of a girl of your age setting up to be learned! It is all very well for poor young women who are obliged to be governesses; but *you*, Lina, injuring all your prospects! No gentleman will look at a girl if he suspects she is a blue-stocking. I declare I don't know what will become of you!' and Mrs. Marsden was moved almost to tears.

For it was the bitterest drop in the

mother's cup, that Lina, the youngest and prettiest of her daughters, should have taken an independent line—one absolutely fatal (so Mrs. Marsden thought) to every chance of her marriage. When Lina was at school, she had gone in for a local university examination. Her name had appeared in the first class, and then, as Mrs. Marsden bitterly lamented, the mischief was done. As soon as she had left school, she announced her intention of becoming a mistress at a girls' High School, or, failing that, the mistress of a village school; for stay at home in idleness on a narrow income, she would not. Her parents were furious, and forbade her ever to mention the subject again.

'Very well,' answered Lina, calmly, 'I shall require the next two years for study. When I am one-and-twenty I shall be

legally free to maintain myself. I am not going to be a burden on my family all my days.'

'A burden on your family!' cried Mrs. Marsden—'of course you need never be that, you with your good looks! if only you will not spoil your eyes with poring over books, and frighten all the gentlemen away with your learning. Why—Oh, why are you not like other girls?' so her mother bitterly moaned.

Here was Harriet nine-and-twenty, losing her complexion and becoming 'loud' in manner, and Janet growing more precise and dull and old-maidish every day—neither of them had had the ghost of an offer of marriage! Whilst Lina, so pretty and graceful and only twenty, *must* marry; if she did not ruin all her mother's hopes by turning governess.

'She might as well be a nun,' sighed Mrs. Marsden; better, in fact, for then she would be buried and out of the way, and the world would not know that she had a daughter who did the terrible thing of earning her livelihood.

But to Harriet and Janet it was a matter of some satisfaction that the pretty younger sister had no wish to enter into competition with them, but had widely differing aims and interests of her own.

'It is incomprehensible to me,' said Lina, 'how any woman can wish to marry, for marrying's sake. To any healthy-minded girl, the thought of love and marriage, and all the rest of it, is naturally distasteful; and nothing reconciles her to it, but caring very much for some individual man. But to hear you two talk about "gentlemen," as you call them, and study how to

please them, and how to make them admire you—to me it is simply revolting.'

At which Harriet and Janet 'stared with great eyes, and laughed with alien lips.'

'Oh, yes,' said they, 'it is all very well talking like that now, but you would not like being an old maid any better than the rest of us.'

'If I have plenty to do, and earn plenty of money, I shall very much like being an old maid,' replied Lina, serenely. 'It is only idle, depressed, poverty-stricken women who are looked down upon.'

'Well, I must say,' Harriet answered, 'that I think it is an awfully good plan of yours, Lina, for really there is not enough money here for all of us to dress well and go to parties, and it is not pleasant for me to have two younger sisters out.'

Harriet, though she was the fine lady of the family, and did not feel herself called upon to toil or spin in the household, had some amount of practical good sense, especially where her own interests were involved; whilst Janet, who was 'domesticated,' and who prided herself on her sewing and cooking, was in reality as sentimental as the heroine of an old-fashioned novel.

So she said,

'Oh yes, Harriet dear, but then think of Lina leaving the shelter of her home, and going out into the world alone and unprotected; think what harsh treatment she may meet with!'

Lina laughed a little bitterly.

'I'll bet you anything that I shall never meet with harsher treatment from the world than I do from my father.'

At that moment the study door opened, and Mr. Marsden's voice was heard saying, irritably,

'Well, then, go—go back to your drawing or needlework, or whatever rubbish it is; I give up the whole thing in despair.'

Clive did not return to the dining-room, but slowly ascended the stairs to his bedroom. He threw himself into a chair, and pressed his hands against his throbbing forehead. What was life worth to him, when an hour's work at Greek made his head feel as though it was bound with crushing bands of iron? He was fairly well out of doors, quietly watching the ever-changing face of nature, and the ways of birds and insects; he could paint and design and even read some kind of books without much fatigue. But this was just what peculiarly irritated Mr. Marsden.

Clive must be in fault, thought his father, he must be idle and fanciful and self-indulgent, if art and poetry and popular science did not make his head ache, and Greek and Latin and mathematics did.

So while Clive lay in a half-stupor, and wished he was dead and out of a world where he was no use, and no credit to his father or himself—Mr. Marsden felt on his side that life had dealt very hardly with him. His wife was plain and uninteresting, his elder daughters were becoming old maids, his youngest was a thorn in his flesh, with her independent airs and her assumption of scholarship—which unfortunately was only too well-founded, and, worst of all, his only son was a miserable failure.

It was the vicar's secret and ever present regret, that years ago he had not joined

the Church of Rome. He was no Ritualist, the latest school of Anglicans was too emotional and insubordinate for his taste; Mr. Marsden was rather one of the 'Tractarians' of the last generation, who reverenced their bishops and obeyed the Prayer-book.

'The Latin branch of the Church Catholic, has wisely forbidden priests to marry,' so he thought, 'whilst an Anglican, especially in a country parish, is as much expected by society to take a wife, as if he were a family doctor.' And he sighed as he remembered that he might have been free from all his sordid worries, he might have been endowed with an authority grandly historic and consecrated, instead of being a mere country parson—a position homely, half-secular, yet not so dignified as that of a squire—he might have been free from

wife and children, if only some thirty years ago he had taken the step which is commonly called 'going over to Rome.'

CHAPTER VII.

A TELEGRAM.

It was one of those autumn days when it seems 'always afternoon.' The sun is low, and the shadows are long, even at noonday; and the very air appears a golden haze.

The intense calm, broken only by the song of robins, and the faint patter of falling leaves, had in it something of a peaceful waiting for death. Everywhere there was a hectic flush of colour, a mellow ripeness, which was very near decay.

At Morwell Vicarage that afternoon, Cecilia Tremayne was giving her last garden-party for the season. She was standing on her smooth-shaven lawn. amidst beds of scarlet geraniums and purple petunias, still arrayed in all their glory, with a background of tall sunflowers, flame-coloured dahlias, and white marguerites; and she was dressed in a gown of soft cream-coloured silk, with a bunch of tea-roses, with glossy brown leaves —just plucked from the garden—at her neck, and in her broad, black lace hat.

There was a group of basket chairs around her, and little rustic tables for holding tea-cups; and a few rich and dusky-hued oriental rugs were spread on the grass, so that the seniors of the party might not be fidgety about damp feet.

Cecilia had had everything arranged under her own eyes, and had superintended the marking of the tennis-courts, and the hanging of the nets, on another lawn, separated from the flower-garden by a gravel walk and a group of evergreens. When everything was ready for the expected guests, when everything had been thought about, and seen to, and arranged, and nothing remained to be done—then Mr. Tremayne, faultlessly attired, the clerical black, which he forced himself to don upon these occasions, setting off his silver hair and pale, fine features, Mr. Tremayne with his air of aristocratic repose, appeared upon the scene.

'My dear Cecilia, where have you hidden yourself since lunch? I have been making a study of that charming bit of colour in

those beech-trees which I see from my study windows. I think I have been pretty successful, and I wanted to show you my little sketch.'

'I shall be delighted to see it to-morrow, uncle, but this afternoon I have to see that everything was correctly arranged. You know that the servants—as you often say—have no eyes, and I am sure you would not have liked the effect if I had left the placing of those rugs and chairs and tables entirely to them.'

'Ah, very true, my dear, still I don't like to see you, with your fine taste, troubled about such sordid little things.'

Cecilia smiled.

'Why, you know, when I am at home, I am generally a regular Martha, "cumbered about much serving." I often wish that

you and I had no vicarage to tie us down, but that we were free to wander all over the world.'

'Bad form, Cecilia,' and Mr. Tremayne winced as if he had heard a discordant musical note, 'distinctly bad form to quote Scripture.'

'Poor dear uncle,' thought his niece, 'he hates the sound of Bible or Prayer-book, as an aspirant grocer hates the sound of the shop. Would he ever forgive me for the vulgarity of my comparison, I wonder?'

'There is one thing,' she said aloud, 'that my domestic experience has taught me—there is no more stupid blunder than to suppose that a good education spoils servants. When they are taught to think, to use their eyes, to see the common sense of things, does it not stand to reason that

they will do their work far better? "Mix your colours with brains," Sir Joshua Reynolds said. I am sure a servant ought to cook, and wait at table, and dust a room "with brains."'

But Mr. Tremayne held the common idea of his class, that ignorance is the solid support of law, order, and morality, and that the only way to keep the poor submissive—is to prevent their learning how to rise.

Here a pony-carriage, stuffed with ladies, drove up the avenue towards the vicarage. These people were Mrs. Prior the doctor's wife, and her daughters, stolid specimens of decorous ladyhood. They were followed by Mrs. Marsden, her three daughters and her son; and other guests speedily began to arrive.

Cecilia received them all with her serene

graciousness, but there was a peculiar brightness in her smile as she welcomed the two younger members of the Marsden family. Lina she heartily respected and admired, the girl of twenty had won prizes in life that she herself could not aspire to. For Cecilia had no aptitude for the studies which bring distinction. She had plenty of imagination and literary taste; she could passionately appreciate the 'Antigone,' in our English translation, but she could not have construed a line of Greek to save her life. She was logical and clear-headed in every-day life, yet she was hopelessly bewildered by a sum in algebra. She was ignorant and uneducated as compared with Lina; and yet the elder woman's mind was full of original and independent thoughts, and observa-

tions of many things—birds and flowers, and trees and minerals, and all kinds of weather wisdom—which she seemed to know and understand, as if she had secret relations with the world of nature.

As for Clive, Cecilia loved him with a motherly and protecting fondness, compassionating his weak health and his early sufferings and disappointments. Cecilia's graceful figure, her gentle ways, her perfect taste, were a never-ending delight to Clive's fastidious eyes; and she had such thorough understanding of his peculiar trials, such sympathy with his love of all beauty in nature and art, that their hearts seem to beat in as perfect unison as if they were indeed the lovers it was Harriet's foolish joy to call them.

Mr. Tremayne had always a kind greet-

ing for Clive, whose artistic powers he admired, and whom he grieved over as not being appreciated by his father.

'If Clive were my son, I should be proud of him,' thought the vicar.

In all probability, he would have been nothing of the sort. The common idea is, that parents are blind to their children's faults, but it is nearer the truth to say that people in general are as dissatisfied with their children, as they are with most of the gifts which Providence is supposed to send them.

But Mr. Tremayne had little liking for the rest of the Marsden family. If he had ever read such a 'Dissenting' book as the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' he might have applied to Lina, Mr. Brisk's description of Mercy: 'A pretty lass, but troubled with ill conditions.' As for Janet, a vague and

dreadful suspicion had once crossed the vicar's mind—that she considered herself eminently suited to become the wife of an elderly country clergyman; and from that time forward he found even Harriet less repulsive, although her 'style' set his teeth on edge.

In a sympathetic observer, poor Janet would that day have aroused some kindly pity. It was really touching to see her; the neat sage-green gown which she thought so æsthetic, and which was merely hideously unbecoming to her sallow complexion—the gown over which she had slaved so many weary days, every stitch of it put in by her own deft fingers; the bunch of pink roses and maiden-hair ferns carefully pinned on her left shoulder; the modest anxiety to 'look nice,' and the meek hope—hope so often and so often deferred

—that there would be Somebody at this party who would prove her fate.

Poor little Janet! martyr to society, which educates girls to be wives and mothers, and then provides just a million too few husbands and fathers—which holds up the domestic sphere as the only one allowed to properly conducted young ladies, and then not only fails to enable forty per cent. of them to fill that sphere, but sneers at those who take active steps to secure the partner absolutely necessary for carrying on the business of their lives. People might laugh at Janet's piteous search for a lover—but had she not been brought up, as millions of girls are brought up, to consider marriage as the object of a woman's existence, and why blame her for doing her utmost to fulfil the end of her creation? Husband-hunting is odious,

very true; but there is an old nursery rhyme which says,

'How can he marry without e'er a wife?'

And if girls are to be taught that marriage is their sole vocation, they may reasonably reply,

'How can I marry without e'er a husband?'

Cecilia Tremayne did her best to provide some unmarried men for her parties, just as she took pains to provide her guests with the choicer sorts of fruit. But there was often a little difficulty about it; sometimes she managed to secure a few officers from Plymouth, and was lucky with her grapes and peaches; sometimes her young lady visitors had to put up with a curate or two, and a country doctor, as well as the poorly-flavoured apples and pears of the district.

This afternoon proved to be one of Cecilia's social successes. There were enough young men in white flannels and girls in pretty frocks, for three games of tennis to be played at once. Harriet and Janet Marsden were peculiarly blessed, for Cecilia had found a fat officer and a consumptive curate, who, not being tennis-players, condescended to join them in the almost obsolete game of croquet. Mrs. Marsden and Mrs. Prior were equally happy, gossiping about the iniquities of their respective servants. Mr. Tremayne, Cecilia, and Clive sat in basket-chairs beneath a great walnut-tree, whose arms spread a breadth of shadow across the smooth and mossy lawn.

It was a pretty scene; the tennis-players springing about in graceful attitudes, the white and pink and other delicately-hued

costumes glancing in the sunlight, with the dark evergreens and the crimsons and purples of the flower-beds as a contrast. Mr. Tremayne lounged in his comfortable chair, his white hands loosely folded, a peaceful smile just parting his chiselled lips, and beaming from his half-closed eyes. He had a languid enjoyment of the mellow sunshine, the long afternoon shadows on the lawn, the rich autumnal colouring, which resembled that of ripe fruit; the russet, golden foliage like pears and apples, the distant hills glowing with the purple bloom of plums. The voices of the tennis-players were too distant to disturb the vicar, and there were graceful forms amongst them not unworthy his occasional glance.

Cecilia, who had given her whole mind that morning to the varied, petty details

which harass every mistress of a household who has, like her, a passion for perfection; who had striven in many unseen, arduous ways to make the party a pleasant one, knew it was so far a success, and then as was her wont, instead of being triumphant, she felt bored to death. She would spend the whole energy of her nature in trying to attain her ideal in all her household arrangements; then, as soon as she knew she had reached it as nearly as was possible to mortal woman, disgust and weariness with the world—which required so much, and which gave so little in return—seized upon her. How she wished they were all away, these uninteresting guests, and she was sitting under the walnut-tree with Clive Marsden. She wanted only Kathleen Rivers to round her social world, and Kathleen, she knew, would be here

presently; she was always a little unpunctual.

'What a pity you cannot play tennis, instead of sitting here with us old people,' said Cecilia, looking with a motherly tenderness at the pale boy with his long, slender limbs reclining in the chair by her side.

His face had a drawn, suffering look; yet he smiled brightly at her with a sort of gratitude that for once he was allowed to remain quiet—that no one was urging him to exert himself—which was very touching.

Cecilia felt she had been selfishly glad to have him with her, it was not natural that he should be content with the companionship of a woman of her age, and so she said,

'I wish you could play tennis with the others.'

'When one can't do a thing, one ceases to wish to do it, I think,' answered Clive. 'But why don't you play, Cecilia?'

'I! no, thank you,' she replied, smiling. 'I am only too glad to rest. Presently they will want tea, and I shall have to work hard again. Why is the world so exacting—why is life not simpler—why must we have so many courses at dinner, so much useless furniture about our houses—such endless trouble about our dress?'

'Yes, and with all this bother about unnecessary things there is so little beauty and so little pleasure in our lives,' said Clive. 'People spend a lot of money on their houses, and the result is generally hideous; and we are, most of us, too tired with struggling to do the useless things society makes us do, to be able to enjoy any real pleasure when it comes.'

'I wish you could go to Switzerland with us some day; there one gets an idea of how simple life might be made. A house built all of wood, with those charming carved balconies, not a carpet on any floor, the furniture all of white unvarnished pine, simple food, simple style of dress, no court, no aristocracy, all the grandeur belongs to nature—mountains, glaciers, and forests.'

'A poor fellow like myself, who only wants to be an artist, might be happy there no doubt—but do you think you would be, Cecilia? you, with your love of politics and your interest in all the questions of the day?'

'Ah, Clive,' she answered, smiling a little sadly, 'that is just the never-ceasing worry of my life. Some ancestor of mine must have had a passion for political life, and

some other ancestor an equally strong passion for nature and wild country life. So you see I am never satisfied, my inherited tastes tear me in two; one half of me would always drag me to London, into the thick of parliamentary strife; and the other half would drag me to the moors or the glaciers or the sea-shore. I believe most of our mental and moral struggles come from the conflicting inherited tendencies we owe to widely differing ancestors.'

'Perhaps that is the reason why you are such a ferocious democrat in your opinions, and an equally fastidious aristocrat in your tastes,' said Clive. 'Perhaps you are descended from a Cavalier on one side, and a Puritan on the other. But after all, this sort of thing is very much complicated by one's bringing up, and one's surroundings. One

inherited side or the other is sure to get a better chance of developing.'

'So you see we get back to the two great laws, the law of inheritance and the law of adaptability—the conservative, and the progressive order of things. I am afraid,' Cecilia added, smilingly, 'if we pursue this subject any further, we shall get down to the foundation of all controversies: Free-will and Predestination——'

Cecilia paused; she saw Mrs. Rivers coming across the lawn, towards the walnut-tree. Kathleen was dressed in olive green velvet, with a silver clasp of old filagree work at her waist-belt, and a kerchief of old Mechlin lace round her white throat. A broad hat and plumes, olive green like her gown, shaded her

brilliant complexion and curling grey hair; she looked as if she had just stepped out of one of Gainsborough's pictures.

Mr. Tremayne was aroused and animated in an instant. He admired no other woman in the world as much as he did Kathleen Rivers. Her grace and beauty and sweetness, with a certain air about her of London society, were a delight to him. He ignored the fact that she was an Irishwoman, and he shut his ears to hints that she was mixed up with some dangerous and seditious people. Her husband was said to be respected by all parties for his independence and disinterestedness; he seldom spoke in the House, but when he did, he was listened to, and was reported in the morning papers—and Mr. Tremayne found it convenient to forget that Eccleston Rivers, M.P., was also said to be one of

the most pestilent Radicals who ever sat below the gangway.

'I admire Mr. Tremayne so much,' Mrs. Rivers had once remarked to Cecilia. 'He is a perfect type of your English country parson. There is blue blood in his veins, all his traditions and his instincts are of the aristocracy. No wonder that feudalism is still so powerful in England when the Church is the bulwark of your land system, and your pastors are hand in glove with your masters. In Ireland, you know, our priests are most of them men of the people, mere peasants' sons sometimes; and so they still believe in "Blessed are the poor"—and religion with us means what you English call revolution.'

Cecilia had not seen her friend since the day they had driven together to Princetown. Kathleen was as cheerful, as self-

possessed, as if she had never sobbed in agony on that bleak moorland road, had never gazed with eyes full of passionate anguish at that convict in his grey uniform working like a slave under the eyes of the slave-driver. The double life which Kathleen Rivers led, was like the hair-shirt and the torturing iron cross worn beneath fine linen and gorgeous brocade, as one reads in mediæval story.

The blood rushed into Cecilia's face, and her eyes met Kathleen's, with eloquent silent sympathy. Kathleen clasped her friend's hand tightly—perhaps there was something of warning in the pressure, for Cecilia looked almost overcome with emotion in the first moment of their meeting; but Mrs. Rivers, as she said of herself, whatever she suffered, 'set her face like a flint' to the outer world.

An hour afterwards, the tennis-players were surrounding the little tea-tables on the lawn. There was a pleasant ripple of voices and laughter, and tinkle of tea-cups. Cecilia, as hostess, was passing from one group to another—exerting herself to be entertaining, and to accomplish much small talk—when she suddenly caught sight of a telegraph-boy coming across the lawn.

Few country dwellers are quite hardened to the sight of such an apparition as this; telegrams are too often to ordinary, non-business folk like the scroll which the prophet saw, inscribed with 'lamentation, mourning, and woe.' Cecilia held her breath for a moment as she watched the messenger look from one group of her guests to another, and then thread his way amongst the little crowd, to where

Mrs. Rivers was sitting beside the vicar.

The boy held out the telegram, saying,

'If you please, ma'am, your servant told me I should find you here.'

Mrs. Rivers took it nonchalantly; these orange-coloured missives were as common in her house as tradesmen's circulars. Electricity was one of her husband's hobbies, and he never wrote a letter when a telegram would serve as well.

But Cecilia watched intently the expression of her friend's face as she unfolded the enclosed pink paper. She saw Kathleen quiver as with a sudden shock, she saw the bright colour fade out of Kathleen's face until it left her deadly pale, she saw Kathleen's bright blue eyes dilate with a strange, unearthly expression. For two or three minutes Mrs. Rivers did

not move or speak, she sat gazing at the telegram—then with one deep breath she roused herself, and very deliberately she folded up the paper, and put it in her pocket.

'I trust you have not had bad news?' said Mr. Tremayne, courteously.

'No, not at all, thank you,' was her perfectly calm answer. 'How beautiful your flowers are still, although the summer is over. I always say that horticulture in England owes so much to the country clergy.'

Mr. Tremayne complacently accepted the compliment. He never took any trouble about his garden, Cecilia did that for him. It was Cecilia who struggled with the surly old gardener, who had not an idea beyond making flower-beds resemble oil-cloth, with geometrical patterns and harshly contrast-

ed colours of scarlet geraniums, yellow calceolarias and blue lobelias; it was Cecilia who insisted upon having in her garden borders, holly-hocks and sunflowers, sweet peas and clove carnations, and a hundred other old-fashioned flowers. But the fact that the vicar had a high ideal of what a garden should be, and that he was quite ready with complaints if his garden did not come up to that ideal, was quite enough, so he thought, to establish his claim to be a benefactor to the flower kingdom.

Mrs. Rivers could not quite keep up her rigid self-repression. She looked towards Cecilia, and the two women's eyes met. Cecilia thrilled all over beneath Kathleen's intense gaze; people looked like that, she thought, when they were near death, and were supposed to see straight into another world. Still the two friends could

not exchange a word, each was surrounded by a little group of chattering, laughing young people, many of whom had never thought one earnest thought, or felt one deep emotion in their lives; and Cecilia suffered a sort of torture as she tried to smile and talk and make herself agreeable.

At last Mrs. Rivers and Cecilia met.

'What is it?' asked the latter, breathlessly, 'I am frightened about you, you looked like death——'

'No,' replied Mrs. Rivers, in a low tone of solemn, impassioned triumph, 'it is not death, but—resurrection! Read that,' and she placed the telegram in Cecilia's hand.

From Maurice O'Donovan, Dartmoor Prison.
To Mrs. Rivers, Morwell Lodge.

'I have been released to-day upon certain conditions. I will be with you by seven o'clock this evening.'

Cecilia could hardly restrain an outcry.

'Hush,' whispered Kathleen, grasping her hand tightly. 'Now, I must go home at once. Make some excuse for me to your uncle. I see he is talking to Mr. Marsden, who has just come. Good-bye, my dear Cecilia, you shall hear from me very soon.'

CHAPTER VIII.

VANITY AND VEXATION OF SPIRIT.

Two clergymen of the Church of England never hated each other more cordially than did the Reverends Reginald Tremayne and Philip Marsden. The latter looked upon the vicar of Morwell with half-envy, half-contempt—envy of his luxurious home, his life of ease and leisure, and freedom from all unecclesiastical domestic ties (for even a Roman priest might have a niece or sister as his housekeeper)

—contempt for the thorough secularity of his ideals, his manners, and his tone of thought.

Mr. Marsden was a hard-working, conscientious man. He did his duty, not only in the amount of services he got through in his parish church, and in the inconveniently early hours at which most of them were held, but he strenuously visited the houses of his parishioners, and allowed the Dissenters among them no quarter, but made their cottage roofs resound with his denunciations of schism. And yet, though he often denied himself, and went without, not only a new coat, but a new theological book, in order to give away money when there was long continued sickness or want of work amongst the poorest of his flock —Mr. Marsden knew he was not half so popular at St. Stephen's as easy-going,

worldly-minded Mr. Tremayne was at Morwell.

On his side, Reginald Tremayne said, languidly,

'What a fatiguing, ill-bred man Marsden is! To take a lofty view of sacerdotal functions is all very well, but surely a man may be a gentleman before he is a priest. And really—though he would be ready to prosecute me for libel for saying so—with all his Anglican views, he has just the sourness and narrow-mindedness of a true Puritan. That peculiar sort of temperament often survives, when the opinions which historically belong to it are dead and buried.'

Mr. Marsden came like a chill shadow upon the moderate amount of enjoyment which his family had managed to extract from this little garden-party. His wife

looked up from her gossip with Mrs. Prior, to see him frowning at his watch, then peering about for his daughters. Clive had shrunk away down a shrubbery path the moment his father came in view.

'I know, dear,' said Mrs. Marsden, in her husband's ear—'that it is time to go, but the girls are enjoying themselves so much, it seems a pity to disturb them. Lina plays tennis very well, it is the only sensible thing she does; see, she is really looking very pretty, and that is young Ridgeway, the rich lawyer's son, playing on the same side, and Harriet and Janet are getting on very well too.'

'It is precisely three minutes to six,' said Mr. Marsden, in his rigid sort of way. 'I said this morning that you were to leave at six.'

Mrs. Marsden stifled an impatient little

sigh. Her powers of 'management' never deserted her, and she thought: 'It is only a foolish woman who opposes a man—a wise one can always circumvent him.'

'Very well,' said she, 'I will go and look for the girls at once. Just say a few words to Mrs. Prior, will you, dear? We will be ready to start in another moment.'

The careful mother sailed along the garden in a direction exactly opposite to where she knew her daughters were to be found, leaving Mrs. Prior—who was High Church, and who often complained that she felt absolutely starved in her own parish church—to look up with a sweet, reverential gaze into the face of the Reverend Philip Marsden. Her talk soothed him, and, woman-hater though he was, wiled away the time, as Mrs. Marsden had foreseen.

If no man is a hero to his valet, still less is he a priest to him. Mr. Marsden was a gloomy, cantankerous sort of husband and father to his own family, but he was a 'successor of the apostles' to the doctor's wife, and the mere consciousness of this fact made him forget that he was being kept waiting for the end of a game of tennis.

As they talked, Mr. Marsden and Mrs. Prior began to saunter along one of the secluded shrubbery paths. Mrs Prior was enthusiastic in her praises of the decorations of St. Stephen's Church, at the late harvest festival, which she had been privileged to attend.

'The grapes and melons and apples were truly superb. The only thing that occurred to me—may I mention it to you?' asked Mrs. Prior, a little timidly. 'Are apples

quite—*quite* worthy to adorn a holy place? They are so associated with the fall of man, you know, the temptation in the garden of Eden.'

'Was it an apple?' replied Mr. Marsden, absently.

'To be sure, now one comes to think of it—does the book of Genesis mention any particular kind of fruit?'

At that moment Mr. Marsden came unexpectedly in sight of his son, who was sitting alone on a garden seat, with his eyes cast down, a weary, dejected look on his pale face.

'Ah, Mrs. Prior,' said the vicar of St. Stephen's, answering his own bitter thoughts instead of her maunderings, 'you talk of the elevating influences of the festivals of our Church, you little know how much there is in the daily domestic

life of an Anglican priest to dim the spiritual vision, and to drag him down to earth.'

Clive started nervously as he saw his father. He had an instinct that he should receive an unpleasant greeting, and he was not mistaken.

'Why are you sitting moping here by yourself?' asked Mr. Marsden, in his irritable way. 'Why don't you go and play tennis with the other young folk?'

Clive reddened a little, and remained silent. It was too humiliating to give—especially in the presence of a third person—the true answer to his father's question—

'Because my doctor has forbidden me to play tennis.'

'I suppose you think it beneath your dignity to play games, but it looks very

much like ill-temper,' remarked Mr. Marsden, as he passed on.

'Your son paints beautifully, I am told.' So Mrs. Prior made a feeble effort to make things pleasant.

'He fancies himself an artist, just as he fancies himself an invalid. A little less imagination and a little more perseverance, would be more useful in everyday life,' said Mr. Marsden, in a tone distinct enough to reach his son's ears.

'But your sweet daughter Lina,' the doctor's wife persisted, in her weak and well-meant attempts to soothe Mr. Marsden—'she at all events will do you credit. I hear the most wonderful accounts of her cleverness. I am told she has passed the most difficult examination—Oxford something, I forget what—but it was quite marvellous for a girl.'

'Pray spare me, Mrs. Prior;' and he shrugged his shoulders. 'Lina's success, as you call it, is one of the troubles of my life. She came under the most unfortunate influences whilst she was at school, and now I dread that she will become one of those pedantic, strong-minded, godless women, who are the curse of these modern days. She is a girl of the period, I fear, though not in the *Saturday Review's* meaning of the term. Oh, for the age of faith, when all women were under the rule of the Church, either fulfilling one end of a woman's creation as wives of the laity, or leading still higher lives in the absolute seclusion of religious houses!'

'I am told,' answered Mrs. Prior, 'that they manage things very differently across the Channel. An old maid is seldom seen in French society. If girls don't marry,

they go into convents, and there is an end of them.'

'Ah, the Latin branch of the Church Catholic is in many things wiser than we are,' returned the Anglican vicar, savagely.

'Poor dear Mr. Marsden,' thought Mrs. Prior, with that disloyalty to her own sex, which feeble-minded women think politic, 'I am afraid his wife and daughters don't appreciate the peculiar saintliness and elevation of his character.'

Meantime Clive sat where his father had left him, his head dizzy, his heart throbbing with the passion of rage and misery which possessed him. To feel constant weariness and discomfort, so that living was a fatigue; to be denied both the work and the play of his own age and kind; to be forced this very afternoon to

remain apart from the life and fun going on around him, and then to be taunted by his own father for being idle and fanciful!

'What can I do—what is to become of me?' he asked himself. 'If I could only get away from home—could only earn just enough to keep myself alive (not that I care about being alive). But this is just what I cannot do. I must go dragging on this dull narrow existence, a burden to the father who despises me as a useless, lazy humbug—' and then, to complete Clive's humiliation, tears—which are tyrants when the flesh is weak—began to force themselves into his eyes.

Presently, his sisters, Harriet and Janet, came walking slowly and disconsolately down the shrubbery path. Their brief enjoyment, their game of croquet, had come

to an end; and their fellow-players, the curate and the officer, after presenting each of them with a cup of tea, had forsaken them, with an air of being at last off duty.

'What is the matter, Clive? how ill you look!' said Janet, kindly.

'It is nothing,' answered Clive, faintly, 'only the old story.'

'You are tired to death, poor boy,' said Harriet, 'Janet do go and find mamma and the pony-carriage. She and Clive had better go home at once.'

Janet departed to look for Mrs. Marsden, and the shabby little pony-carriage which had been hired to convey herself and her son to and from Morwell Vicarage. Harriet sat down by her brother's side, and waited for Janet's return.

A thick hedge of rhododendrons

sheltered this path from one of the several lawns of the vicarage garden. Harriet and Clive were entirely concealed. Presently she heard a voice which she recognised as that of Major Goodwin, who had been playing croquet with her that afternoon. He had evidently just met with an acquaintance.

'What have you been doing with yourself all the afternoon?' asked the latter. 'Haven't seen you before, though some one told me you were here.'

'Oh, playing croquet, that antiquated game, with two equally antiquated girls. Awfully slow work,' said Major Goodwin.

'Miss Tremayne one of the antiquated girls?' the other man inquired, rather archly.

'Certainly not,' was the emphatic

answer. 'One never looks on Miss Tremayne, in her position as mistress of her uncle's house, as a girl at all. She has quite the style of a married woman. But, when spinsters past their youth put on juvenile airs, the result is slightly absurd—' and the two men passed on out of hearing.

Harriet's face was in a flame. 'Listeners never hear any good of themselves' is a true enough saying; but in this case, unless she had put her fingers in her ears, she could not have avoided hearing what Major Goodwin was saying, and the fault was his alone. Harriet had flattered herself that she looked 'awfully nice' that afternoon. She had played with skill, she had talked with spirit—and this was the result: 'antiquated,' 'slightly absurd.'

A burning desire for revenge seized

upon her. She would show the world that she was not rejected and ridiculed by everybody; though she was nearly thirty years old, and unmarried. A way was open to her, she believed, a way she had hesitated about taking, hoping that some more brilliant alternative to a life of spinsterhood might be offered to her some day. But time was going on, and the word 'antiquated' (poor soul, she was really in her prime, and physical strength and nervous energy and all the tides of life were at their highest with her) but the word 'antiquated' was like a poisoned arrow rankling in her flesh. And one word has often, before now, decided a destiny.

The climax of Harriet's mortification was reached when she passed the tennis-ground, and saw Lina, flushed, agile, youth-

ful, bidding good-bye to the young man in white flannels who had been her partner in the game, and who was beaming upon her, and saying—'I hope I shall meet you again before long.'

'Lina who looks like that, and is only twenty, Lina says she does not care to marry, and would sooner earn her livelihood and be independent! What a contrary world it is,' sighed Harriet. 'And it is not as though I had not tried being young too; I was twenty once as well as Lina. But I never got any good by it, that I can see.'

CHAPTER IX.

A TICKET-OF-LEAVE MAN.

THREE days afterwards, Cecilia was taking a solitary walk along her favourite moorland road. She was an excellent horsewoman, and frequently rode with her uncle who had always kept a horse for her especial use. But to-day he had driven some miles into the country to lunch with a neighbouring squire, and Cecilia was glad of the opportunity of taking a long walk by herself.

She was feeling a little lonely, and left

out in the cold, for she had heard nothing from Mrs. Rivers since the day of the garden-party. But she was hardly surprised at this. Kathleen was never a good correspondent, and how could Cecilia expect to be anything to her now, in all the wonderful joy and excitement of her brother's release? Probably they had gone together to London, probably she would never return to Morwell Lodge, thought Cecilia sadly. 'I never expected to have more than a small share of her thoughts; I must be less than nothing to her now—and yet, how much sympathy I feel for her!'

Cecilia's road led her past Morwell Lodge. Having made up her mind that the worst had happened, and that her friend had left the place for ever, she cast a hasty glance at the house, feeling

sure that she should see the blinds drawn down, and the unmistakeable vacant look which a house has when the owner is away. Perhaps by assuming the certainty of what she dreaded most, she was unconsciously trying to coax fate into being better than her fears.

But what was that on the road, a few hundred yards away? Mrs. Rivers' little basket-carriage and pair of ponies, beyond a doubt. Kathleen was driving as usual, and by her side there sat a man—the mere glimpse of whom set Cecilia's heart beating quickly.

The pony-carriage stopped at the gate of Morwell Lodge, the gentleman alighted, and was about to open the gate, but at that moment Mrs. Rivers evidently recognised her friend, and they awaited her approach.

Cecilia hardly knew what happened

during the next few minutes; she trembled a little as she walked towards Mrs. Rivers, and her face was very pale. Kathleen gave her her usual hearty greeting, then, 'Let me formally introduce you to each other—my brother Maurice—my friend Miss Tremayne. You have seen each other before,' said Mrs. Rivers, with a strange sort of triumph in her tone.

Cecilia bowed, with a certain amount of reverence, to the young man who was standing by the gate, but her intense, though repressed agitation prevented her from having, at the first moment, any clear idea of what he was like.

She was conscious only that there was a bright smile on his face, as he returned her bow, and said, in a clear, sweet-toned voice,

'I would not have allowed my sister to

introduce an Irish felon to an English lady, if she had not told me what thorough sympathy you have with our National cause.'

'My whole heart is in it,' replied Cecilia, the blood rushing back to her pale face. 'But it is I who should hardly have ventured to meet you, you have such cause to hate everybody who is English.'

'No, not *everybody*,' he answered, with the same frank, winning smile.

'Miss Tremayne is no Saxon, at all events; her soul is as Celtic as her name,' said Mrs. Rivers, looking at her friend with a proud tenderness. 'Cecilia, how glad I am we have met you! You must come into the house with us and have some tea.'

So Cecilia, with her heart still beating a little hurriedly, and her brain still a little

confused, accompanied Mrs. Rivers into the drawing-room, and Mr. O'Donovan followed them a few minutes later.

When they had seated themselves at the little tea-table in the bow window, Cecilia ventured to give a direct glance of scrutiny at the released convict.

Maurice O'Donovan was a man whom few could pass in the street without noticing. He was in the very prime of life—tall, upright, and muscular, with the air of a most stately, gallant gentleman. He had bright brown hair, rather thin on the temples, and a slight moustache and peaked beard which did not hide the determined lines round his powerfully moulded mouth and chin. The finest feature in his face were his eyes, as dark blue as the Mediterranean Sea; they were full of tenderness now, as he looked at his

sister, but sometimes flame seemed to flash from them. His face was pale and worn, but the traces of suffering had not destroyed its youthfulness, he had endured untold agonies and hardships, and yet he looked full of force and energy. Long years on the bleak heights of Dartmoor had not crushed his body or tamed his will: he had been dead and buried, but now he had risen to life again. Ireland would hear of him once more—yes, and so would England too.

With the white and wasted look of a man recovering from a long and terrible illness, there was about him also the convalescent's sense of repose and comfort after 'long grief and pain.' He seemed in a blissful state of rest, from which he aroused himself, sometimes with a slight start, when he was addressed. His eyes

rested now on Kathleen, now on Cecilia, as if to look at them gave him a deep and dreamy pleasure, and they could not realise the refreshment the mere sight of a refined and gentle woman's face was to him, after seven years of a dreadful sort of monastery.

And Kathleen gazed at her brother with a passionate joy and almost awe, which brought to Cecilia the thought: 'So Mary must have looked at Lazarus after his resurrection.' There was something about Maurice O'Donovan which was a little strange and unusual—something which removed him to a little distance from them, and from ordinary daily life—like the chill and silence and horror of the grave still lingering about the risen man.

The first remark which Mrs. Rivers made was common-place enough.

'Cecilia, does Mr. Tremayne file the *Times?* No, I suppose not. I wonder if it is possible to see any old newspapers anywhere in this neighbourhood? My brother, you must know, divides his time between reading all the newspapers he can get, and asking me questions about what is really ancient history now, and I cannot remember as much as I wish.'

'You perhaps do not realize, Miss Tremayne, that I know next to nothing of what has happened in the world for seven years. You would find it hard to match ignorance such as mine, in any of the peasant's cottages on these lonely moors.'

Cecilia could only look at Maurice in silence; she could not venture to express pity for sufferings such as his, and she was moved almost more than she could

bear by the calm cheerfulness, even gaiety with which he spoke of them.

'You remember, I daresay,' he went on, 'that when Lafayette was taken prisoner by the Austrians, during the French Revolution, they forbade him to see a newspaper or to know anything that was going on outside his dungeon walls. Long ago I used to wonder how Lafayette lived through that part of his captivity. Well, I have tried it, and I am alive, you see. But I feel as though an old newspaper was worth its weight in gold to me.'

Here Maurice passed his tea-cup to his sister, saying,

'Another cup of your delicious tea, if you please, Kathleen. I had almost forgotten what good tea was like. Everything in civilized life has become a little surprise to me.'

'Do you like this room?' asked Mrs. Rivers, anxious that his present surroundings should please him as much as possible. 'It is very plainly furnished, but I did not care to have anything elaborate in this mere cottage.'

In truth, the drawing-room at Morwell Lodge exactly fulfilled Cecilia's ideal of extreme simplicity combined with artistic taste. The floor was covered with Indian matting, the furniture was of pinewood, the curtains were embroidered cream-coloured linen, and a touch of deep colour was given by the blue delft jars filled with little scarlet dahlias and flame-coloured marigolds, and a great bowl heaped with Jacqueminot and Gloire de Dijon roses.

'Your room is simply Paradise to me,' replied the seven-years prisoner. 'I used sometimes to dream of a pretty, sunny

room like this, and it was a very pleasant dream. But the awakening was not so pleasant,' he added, half under his breath; and a dark shadow for one moment swept over his face.

Kathleen clenched her hands and bit her lips to keep in a cry of pain. It was a word or two like this, now and then carelessly uttered by her brother, which stabbed her with sharp sudden realization of the long agony he had endured. To dream of some simple, pretty home like this cottage of hers, where she could come and go at her own free-will, to dream of liberty, then to wake to a prison-cell, to the life of a slave—this is what her brother Maurice had done again and again.

The deprivation of all knowledge of what was happening in the outer world, was one of the very few of his sufferings

about which he could bring himself to speak to his sister. She should never hear, if he could help it, of the physical and moral degradations of penal servitude. But she was not so ignorant as he had hoped.

All his present thoughts and feelings he could confide in her without reserve. And here let me quote the words of one of the noblest of the long list of sufferers for the cause of Ireland, when he speaks of "The wild, ecstatic, soul-filling happiness of the first day of freedom.'*

'Everything which meets the gaze of the liberated prisoner, every thought of the present and the future, assumes a brighter hue and wears a more blissful meaning from the terrible recollection of

* Michael Davitt's 'Leaves from a Prison Diary.'

the felon degradation, the narrow cell, the stinted sunlight, the loathsome daily task, the brutal warder, and the weary, heart-longing expectancy for the hour of deliverance.'

'I am very glad you like this little house, Maurice,' said his sister, 'but I wish there was a different view from the window, anything but Dartmoor.'

'Ah, you don't know,' replied Maurice, smiling, 'how those hills with their rocky crests and the lights and shadows sweeping over them have sometimes brought me peace and consolation. And there are bits of the moor which I could see from the prison which reminded me of the west of Ireland.'

'I suppose you will soon return to Ireland, Mr. O'Donovan,' said Cecilia. She

had been struggling with a strange shyness, and it was with difficulty she could bring herself to make a common-place remark to a man so far removed from her by everything but the intense sympathy she felt for him, and the common tongue which, despite themselves, the Irish are obliged to use.

'I'll return to Ireland before long, no doubt, but not just yet. You have heard, I suppose, Miss Tremayne, of a ticket-of-leave man? In fact, I think there was once a play with that title. Well, I am a ticket-of-leave man. I have been released upon certain conditions, which conditions, as I told the Governor of the prison, I have not the slightest intention of observing,' he said, a little haughtily. 'One of these conditions is, that I am not to return to Ireland. So that it will be wiser for me

to do everything I want to do before I go home. I'll probably be re-arrested soon after I set foot in my own country.'

'Maurice!' cried Kathleen, half-rising from her seat, in her agitation, 'we—your friends must make a prisoner of you if you attempt to go back to Ireland!'

'We will see about that when the time comes.' He smiled as he answered, but there was a look in his face which reminded Cecilia that no entreaties had availed to shake his determination, when he remained in his home waiting for his arrest. He was a man who was never to be turned from a course he had resolved upon, by any thought of consequences to himself.

'At least, you will go to America first,' pleaded Mrs. Rivers, with a strained and suffering look on her beautiful face. Her

sorrows were not ended by her brother's release, rather a new kind of pain and anxiety had begun for her. She began to crave for her husband's return home. It gave her a sense of peace and safety even to think of the small grey man, with his sunny face and placid ways—albeit he held what his fellow M.P.'s called violent and revolutionary opinions.

'Yes, certainly, I must go to the greater Ireland beyond the Atlantic whilst I have the chance. You know, Miss Tremayne;' and again he turned to her with a winning grace and courtesy, as if he were careful that she, an Englishwoman and a comparative stranger to him, should not feel herself excluded from the conversation; 'you know, as one of our leading men said a few days ago, the Irish struggle has passed beyond the shores of Ireland. It is

no longer the struggle of a people, but the struggle of a race.'

'Yes,' answered Cecilia, who, with all her enthusiasm for one oppressed nationality, never dissociated it from the cause of freedom all over the world. 'America must be to you somewhat as Bulgaria and Roumania are to the Slavs under Turkish rule.'

As she spoke she rose, she was acutely sensitive to the possibility of being in the way, of interrupting the perfect interchange of thought and confidence between the long separated brother and sister. The very poignancy of the pleasure aroused in her by the presence of Maurice O'Donovan, warned her to go, because it was such a temptation to remain longer. She knew that the half hour she had just spent over the tea-table in this homely

little room, would stand out in vivid relief—every word and thought remembered—from all the rest of her life.

'Good-bye, Kathleen. I suppose you are going to London soon?'

'We are going to-morrow,' was Mrs. Rivers' not wholly unexpected answer, but Cecilia's heart sank down like lead. 'My brother has various old friends to see in London, and I am going to Ireland a little later on with letters and messages to other friends. We know better than to trust important correspondence to the post-office, don't we, Cecilia? Even Miss Tremayne gets her letters opened sometimes, Maurice, because I am known to write to her, and some of my letters never reach their destination at all.'

'I trust we will meet again, before I go to America,' said Maurice, as he and his

sister accompanied Cecilia into the hall.

When he had opened the door, he bowed, but Cecilia, with a quick, warm impulse, put out her hand. He held it a little longer than was quite conventional, and for one moment they looked straight into each other's eyes,—Cecilia with a gaze of sympathy, compassion, reverence, which a man less chivalrous, less single-minded than Maurice O'Donovan might have misinterpreted, but which he met with a look as frank, as respectful as her own. He knew that to her he represented all the struggles, all the sufferings of his nation.

'Some day, Miss Tremayne, you must tell me how it was you came to care so much for Ireland.'

In another moment, Cecilia was walking down the moorland road thinking to herself—'I never saw Kossuth, Mazzini, any

of the heroes I have worshipped all my life; but I have seen now some of their glorious kindred, I have talked with a man who has links with the patriots of past history, a soldier in the noble army of martyrs.'

CHAPTER X.

HARRIET MARSDEN IS AVENGED.

The afternoon following the garden-party at Morwell Vicarage, Harriet Marsden, clad in a dowdy waterproof cloak, set forth from her home with a basket in her hand containing little packets of tea and arrowroot, which she had begged from the cook. She was going to see a certain sick woman in the parish, she said. For the last few weeks Harriet had taken to occasionally visiting the poor, a proceeding which rather astonished her family, as

the sisters were accustomed to leave all 'good works' to Janet.

Harriet stopped at a little white-washed cottage. She rapped impatiently at the door, then pushed it open.

'Oh, good morning, Mrs. Hoskins,' she said, to a white-faced woman sitting huddled in a shawl by the fireside. 'I have brought you some things; I can't stay.' She put the basket down on a rough deal table, and bounced out of the cottage again. 'Thank goodness that's done,' she said to herself, 'and now for business.'

She walked quickly along the high-road towards St. Stephen's railway station (for the village, small as it was, was connected with the main line to London), then, with one hurried glance over her shoulder to make sure she was not observed, she turned into a narrow lane. Past banks luxuriant with

ferns, and over-arched with oak and ash-trees, she went, until she came to a rough, five-barred gate. She unfastened the latch, and entered a muddy farm-yard, over-run with poultry, pigs, and ducks. Great barns and cowsheds, with thatched roofs and yellow ricks, stood round an ancient farmhouse with great granite porch and casement windows, and grey walls muffled with fuchsia and honeysuckle.

Harriet Marsden entered the porch, slipped off her long grey cloak, threw it down on one of the stone seats, and stood revealed in a dainty pink cambric gown, with ruffles of lace round her throat and wrists. She then rapped the antique knocker on the great oaken door, which stood wide open.

A voice from within invited her to enter, and she passed into a long, low room, with

a black oaken beam running across the white-washed ceiling and deep window-seats below the casements. There were mahogany chairs and tables of genuine last century work, an oaken dresser on which were ranged quantities of old Staffordshire 'lustre ware,' an immense open fire-place, and a high stone mantel-shelf on which gleamed bright silver-plated candlesticks and snuffers tray. This was the parlour of the farm-house.

An elderly woman, with white hair under a widow's cap, and pleasant features, sat in an old-fashioned chintz-covered arm-chair, reading the report of a Methodist tea-meeting in the *Western Morning News*. Her face lighted up as Harriet entered.

'Why, dear Miss Marsden, you are quite a stranger; I was afraid you were never coming to see me again.'

There are some people who always reward their friends' visits by complaints of not receiving them oftener.

Harriet smiled her sweetest as she shook hands with the old lady, and then she sighed a little.

'You know, dear Mrs. Wendron, there are always difficulties in the way of my coming to see you. There is so much bigotry and intolerance towards dissenters at home. I sometimes fear I shall have to give up coming here altogether, and that would be such a grief to me. I always feel so much better for a good talk with you. Oh, dear, I do wish I could sometimes attend the services in your chapel!'

'Well, I'm sure, Miss Marsden,' replied Mrs. Wendron bridling, and looking much gratified, 'it is a pleasure to see anyone

like you—brought up as you have been, so genteelly, as one may say—striving after the light. Our little chapel here is but a humble building, and we are all of us plain working people, more or less.'

Mrs. Wendron could not shake off the feeling, common amongst dissenters, that there was something of superior caste in 'Church people,' which made attentions from them a compliment.

'My father, you see, is an awfully High-Churchman;' and Harriet sighed again; 'and that makes things so very awkward for me.'

'But you know the words, dear Miss Marsden—"He that loveth father or mother more than me——" I was told by one who used to go to your church sometimes, that it is most painful to see the manœuvres that Mr. Marsden goes through in the

service—not that my friend paid any attention to them, she just shut her eyes and went on praying. Well now, Robert will be in directly, and we are just going to have tea, and I shall take it very kind, Miss Marsden, if you will stop and have a cup with us.'

Harriet assented with delight; and she sat patiently listening to Mrs. Wendron's talk, but all the time with an abstracted look in her face, and her head slightly on one side, as if she were listening for something. A stout, rosy-cheeked maid-servant bustled in and out with the tea-things, and presently came the sound that Harriet had been waiting for—a man's heavy footstep in the granite porch.

Robert Wendron, tenant of this Radford Farm, son of the widow who was talking to Harriet Marsden, stood in the doorway

of the room. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man of thirty, dressed in a rough tweed suit, and much splashed leather gaiters. His face was handsome, sunburnt, with rather a stern expression; he had a thick brown moustache and beard, and dark, passionate eyes. He stood for a moment, in the doorway: then he came forward into the room, pulling off his soft tweed hat, as if with an afterthought; when quite close to Harriet—

'Good afternoon, Miss Marsden,' so he addressed her, rather brusquely. 'Mother and I thought you did not mean to come here any more.'

Harriet half rose from her chair, and held out her hand half timidly, with a sidelong glance from her sparkling black eyes.

'It is such a pleasure to come and have

a chat with Mrs. Wendron sometimes,' she murmured, casting down her eyes again, 'but I have to be a little careful. You can have no idea of the difficulties I have to contend with at home.'

'I tell Miss Marsden, Robert, that if she gets into trouble at home through coming to see us, she must remember it is for conscience sake. She ought to set her face against all the mummeries which go on at her father's church, and come and hear the pure gospel preached at our chapel, and I am sure, you'll say with me, she'll always be welcome in this house, if so be she'll do us the honour of coming to see us sometimes.'

Mr. Wendron did not reply to this, but he drew up his chair to the tea-table beside Harriet.

'Give Miss Marsden a cup of tea as

quick as you can, mother. It's a fagging walk for her all the way from the vicarage here,' he said, in a deep-toned voice, with the same west-country accent in which his mother spoke.

Little was said during the substantial meal of home-made bread, butter, clotted cream and eggs, all produce of the farm, with great apple pasties, plum-cakes yellow with saffron, cut-glass dishes full of marmalade and raspberry jam.

Mrs. Wendron, indeed, talked of her chapel and the class-meetings, of the respective merits of 'Rounders' and 'Locals,' the two species of preachers who, varying from Sunday to Sunday, occupied the pulpit at the little white-washed Bethesda in the village of St. Stephen's.

'You must get a bit tired, always having

the same minister as they do at church,' said she. 'It's like having mutton for dinner every day; it may be the best meat, but you lose your appetite for it all the same. Whilst, you see, in our connection, we have a change every Sunday, and change is as good for the mind as 'tis for the body, I always say.'

Robert Wendron paid but little heed to his mother, but looked from time to time at Harriet with quick and passionate glances; handing her, with a sort of sullen attentiveness, everything on the table, and trying to pile up her plate with good things.

She sat with eyes cast down, her colour coming and going, she seemed embarrassed, almost frightened. At last she started, and glanced at the eight-day clock with its brass face and tall mahogany-

case, which stood in a corner of the room.

'I thought of walking to the station to meet mamma and Janet,' she said, with a sort of nervous apprehension. 'They went to Tavistock this afternoon, and they are coming back by the 6.15 train. I must go, indeed I must.'

'Well, good-bye, my dear,' said Mrs. Wendron, affectionately, 'do come and see us again soon.'

The young farmer walked to the door; there he stood, crushing his tweed hat between his hands.

'Shall I walk a little way with you, Miss Marsden?' he asked, with a stern significance in his tone.

'If you like,' answered Harriet, her eyes still shyly lowered.

She picked up her waterproof cloak from the stone seat in the porch, then she went

across the miry farmyard. Robert Wendron followed her, and, as she began to unfasten the rusty latch of the gate with hands which trembled a little, he took it from her, threw the gate wide open, and stood waiting for her to pass him, looking down into her face with fixed and penetrating eyes.

'Shall I walk all the way to the station with you, Miss Marsden?'

Again she murmured, in some confusion, 'If you like;' then she added, quickly, 'that is—I mean, not quite *all* the way.'

'I understand,' he answered, 'you shan't run the risk of being caught walking with me. That train isn't due for another half-hour.'

They walked side by side down the steep hill which led them to the railway. Not a

word was spoken for some minutes; then Robert Wendron began, abruptly,

'We are wasting a lot of time, and I have got something to say to you, Miss Marsden. When you came and took shelter in our house from the thunderstorm, some weeks ago, I thought you out and out the nicest young lady I had ever seen, you talked so prettily to my mother, and she took quite a fancy to you, you and she have got on swimmingly together; and you kept on coming after that from time to time, and I got to look out for you, and to think about you, and I thought you weren't stuck-up, though you were a parson's daughter, and you didn't seem altogether happy and comfortable at home, and so I thought——'

His voice faltered for a moment; then he went on hurriedly, his eyes turned away

from her—'I thought could you perhaps bring your mind to come down to our sort of life, we are just plain, working people—and so I went and lost my head the last time I saw you, and that is three weeks ago come Monday, and—and you were very much put out, you know, and I thought you meant never to come near us again. And now you have come and I want to know'—and suddenly his manner changed, he turned upon her, and looked straight in her face with almost fierceness, 'I want to know if you mean anything by it?'

'I did not mean to offend you that day,' answered Harriet, in a low tone. 'I was so taken by surprise, you know.'

'You had no need to be surprised. You must have seen for some time past what was in my mind about you.'

'I have been thinking about what you said ever since, and so I—I came to-day—to see your mother and—and you.'

'You came to see me, did you?' A light flashed into the sombre passionate face. 'Then, Miss Marsden, all I've got to say is—will you marry me, and put up with our homely country ways, though you are a lady born and bred, and I am just a plain farmer?'

Harriet's cheeks glowed, she thrilled all over with triumph. The supreme moment of her life had come, never before had she heard such words from the lips of mortal man. And though at times she had flattered herself that Robert Wendron wanted to marry her, yet she had often doubted whether he was thoroughly in earnest. But now all suspense was over.

She was somewhat at a loss how to

answer him. Her memory cast a hurried glance over some of the love-scenes in the tons of novels that she had read, trying to recall how a woman should conduct herself with grace and dignity in a crisis such as this. It ended very tamely. She only said, stammering a little with excitement,

'Oh, dear, I really don't know what to say. I am sure papa would never consent to it.'

'I have nothing to do with your father. You are quite old enough to make up your mind for yourself.'

Harriet winced, her face fell; did Robert Wendron too think her 'antiquated'?

'Mind you,' he went on, 'I never cared twopence about those chits of girls with baby faces that some men run after. You are a bit older than some of them, and a good deal more sensible, and you're just the right age for me, I take it.'

'I couldn't—I really couldn't,' murmured Harriet, re-assured, but convinced that the correct thing in her circumstances was a show of reluctance and confusion. 'You are a dissenter, you know, as well as a farmer, and it would be an awfully unheard-of thing for me to do.'

'Then, Miss Marsden'—Robert Wendron stood still in the middle of the road, and glared at Harriet with a face which she afterwards described as dreadful—'Am I to understand that you have been making a fool of me all this time? Coming to my house again to-day, and telling me to my face that you came to see me?' and he ground the heel of his heavy boot into the earth.

Harriet panted with a sort of terror and fascination.

'Oh, please—*please* don't say anything more—we had better part here.'

'No, we are not going to part till I've told you a bit more of my mind. You are a lady born and bred, as I said before, and that is one reason why I care about you—but I am a man, if I am not a gentleman, and I am not going to let you play with me, like a cat playing with a mouse. Look here, now, it's no use my telling you that I love you, that I would give every penny I have in the world to get you for my wife, you know all that just as well as I do—but—but—' then his stern voice began to tremble, 'if you've been coming here to-day just for nothing but to raise my hopes again, and then to deceive me worse than ever—why, I feel as if I could be the death of you, that's all.'

'Don't, don't say such dreadful things,'

answered Harriet, ready to cry, with a strange feeling that was half fright and half ecstasy. 'I am not deceiving you;' then, really unable to speak another word, she put her daintily gloved hand into Robert's strong, rough, sunburnt one. 'I cannot help it,' she thought, 'I have gone too far, he would be ready to murder me now if I refused to marry him.'

His fingers did not close round hers until he had asked,

'Do you mean that you promise to be my wife, and that you'll abide by your promise, come what will?'

Then at her whispered, 'Yes,' he grasped her hand until he almost crushed it.

So Harriet Marsden's fate was sealed, and she, the daughter of the High-Church vicar of St. Stephen's, and of a true

British matron who revered propriety and all the laws and customs of good society—Harriet was engaged to marry a low-born tenant-farmer of the Methodist persuasion.

She was in a state of rapture which for the present blinded her eyes to all the consequences of what she had done. She knew only that she was at last avenged for all the slights cast upon her by the 'gentlemen' who neglected to pay her attentions, and by the father and mother who grumbled and sighed because she appeared likely to become an old maid. She scarcely loved Robert Wendron as yet, but she was fascinated by him, his rough wooing had charms for her. She had expected that a man in his position would have been timidly respectful, and that in time would have annoyed her as a

constant reminder that he was her social inferior. But, on the contrary, he behaved with all the frank pride and independence of the Cornishman that he was (there is plenty of Cornish blood to be found east of the Tamar).

There was more than that, however—there was something about Robert Wendron that was masterful and over-bearing, which Harriet, in the first hours of his love-making, thought delightful. Like all animal-natured women, she liked to feel herself overwhelmed by superior force. That pleasure is but a fleeting one, however, as are all pleasures which belong to a lower type of passion. It is no pleasure, very much the reverse, to be domineered over in the prosaic working-days of married life, or of any other life. Robert Wendron's farm-labourers did not think it quite

so charming as Harriet did, to be stormed at, to feel as though their very souls were not their own, and that it was as much as their lives were worth to cross the master's will.

As for Robert Wendron himself, his love for Harriet was mixed with gratified vanity. That a woman entirely out of his own class, a Church of England parson's daughter, should have come time after time to his farm-house, making friends with his mother, showing herself pleased with his attentions, this was so gratifying to his self-love that his strong head was completely turned for a little while. There were plenty of pretty young girls at the other farms round about, whom Robert Wendron might have had for the asking, but then of course they were not ladies; and it was a genuine pleasure to him to

meet with even so much of refinement as Harriet possessed. He liked it in 'womenfolk,' though he made no pretension to anything which he thought would be inconvenient for a hard-working man. And there was about Harriet a certain undefinable something, which made her—outwardly at all events—one of the 'gentlefolk.'

'I am afraid,' she said presently, with a little shiver, 'that you don't realize what dreadful difficulties there are before us. Papa and mamma will never give their consent.'

'We'll do without it,' Robert answered, sturdily. 'My mother likes you, and that is all I care about. She'll give you a welcome, I'll answer for that. And as for the rest, my dear, don't you trouble yourself about it. I'll take care of you.'

This oddly-assorted pair of lovers had lingered so long upon the road—while Robert uttered tender follies which seemed to Harriet a very Song of Solomon—that presently a white cloud of steam was seen coming along the ravine through which ran the railway.

'There is the train!' cried Harriet, in terror. 'Oh, please go back, Robert. I shall die if mamma sees me with you!'

'It won't do for you to be ashamed of me, Harriet,' he answered, grimly, holding her by the arm. 'You have got to put up with me now for good and all.'

'I will do anything—anything—' Harriet pleaded, in an agony—'if you will only let me go now. I *cannot* tell them.'

'Will you marry me without telling them?' he demanded, still holding her.

'I will, I promise you I will!'

'Very well then, I'll let you go now; you have given me your word, mind!' he called after her as she flew down the road to the station, just as the train came up.

Then Robert turned, and ascended the hill again, saying to himself, with his fist clenched, and his dark eyes ablaze with passion,

'She is mine! and I defy all the parsons, and the devil himself, to take her away from me!'

Five minutes after, Mrs. Marsden and her daughters, laden with parcels, the results of shopping at Tavistock, were toiling up the same road on their way home to the vicarage.

Mrs. Marsden's sharp eyes detected a morsel of pink cambric beneath Harriet's grey waterproof cloak.

'How extravagant of you,' she said,

severely, for she still treated her daughters as children to be kept in order—'how extravagant of you to wear that new dress this showery afternoon. As if there was anyone to see what you wore along this country road!'

They were passing the lane which led to Radford Farm. Harriet's guilty heart gave a great bound. For, coming towards them, she saw Robert Wendron on his chestnut mare. She had been ready saddled and waiting for him in the stable; he had mounted her and ridden forth determined to see his love once more, or perhaps he wanted to refresh his memory with a sight of some of the members of her family. He had almost forgotten what they were like; he wondered whether they looked the sort of people to cast off Harriet for ever, if she married him. He

hoped they would do so; he did not want to be bothered with her father the parson, and her fine lady mother and sisters.

He rode past them, with one keen penetrating glance, his handsome face as sombre as usual, his colour a little heightened perhaps, but with no other token of being conscious of Harriet's presence.

'Did you see, Harriet,' said Janet, with much animation, when Robert was out of hearing, 'that was young Wendron of Radford Farm. Isn't he handsome? quite the best looking man in the place; and what a nice horse he is riding!'

'Really, Janet, I am quite shocked at you!' so her mother reproved her. 'To think of noticing the appearance of a man of that class! It is not only that he is nothing but a common, uneducated farmer, but he and his mother are some of the most

obstinate schismatics in the place. It is most sad for your papa to have such people in his parish, undoing all the good he does, and undermining the influence of the Church. They ought to have been turned out of Radford Farm long ago. No landowner with any sense of duty would allow a dissenter to rent a farm, or even a cottage on his estate.'

Harriet listened, sick with misery. She realized, as she had never done before, the gulf which lay between her family and her lover. Her marriage with Robert Wendron would be an unpardonable sin, an act of high treason to the Church and to society.

At that moment, Robert was a few yards ahead of the Marsdens. 'Accidentally on purpose,' as children say, he dropped his whip, and had to dismount to pick it up.

So it fell out that the ladies again passed the farmer on the road. A sort of magnetism drew Harriet's eyes for a moment to his own. They were fixed upon her with a look so ardent that her heart leaped up in triumph, and all her doubts and terrors were scattered to the winds. Yes, she would marry him, come what would.

CHAPTER XI.

CLANDESTINE AND SCHISMATIC.

THE three or four weeks which followed were to Harriet Marsden such a time of diversified worry and misery that she often said to herself,

'Married life ought to be awfully nice, to make up for this.'

She had to invent plausible excuses for walking out alone. Then when she was arrayed in her dowdy cloak, with a basket full of parcels of tea or arrowroot, Janet would propose to accompany her on her

visits to the poor; or Clive would gladly walk with her when she said she was going to search for ferns and berries in the hedge-rows; and Lina was always inconveniently interested if she expressed a wish to look in at the village school. Harriet dared not confide in either of her sisters; Lina would have been horrified if she had known what Harriet proposed to do; and Janet, who would have been more sympathetic when a marriage was concerned, could never keep a secret.

At last, after waiting several days in a sort of torture of suspense and continual disappointment, Harriet, nearly at her wit's end, succeeded in getting an hour to herself in which to pay a hurried visit to Radford Farm. Then Robert Wendron, after giving her one

passionately tender greeting, began to storm at her for not coming oftener.

'How can I help it?' she answered, piteously, 'you are very hard on me. No other girl has to do what I have—go to a man's own house in order to see him. It is awfully horrid. Thank goodness, your mother is always at home.'

'And how can I help it?' retorted Robert. 'Suppose I were to go to your house, as you say it is the proper thing for the man to do——'

'Oh, for heaven's sake, don't!'

'Suppose I were to go to your house and tell your father the parson all about you and me! I wonder what he'd do? He would try to kick me out of the house, wouldn't he? only, as it happens, I am

twice the man he is; and, as for you, I should think he would whip you and lock you up on bread and water.'

'How can you say such things?' and Harriet turned away from him in anger; then, the next moment, Robert had his strong arm round her, and he cried, with a triumphant laugh,

'Never you mind, my dear; I am going to be your husband next week, and nobody shall ever be unkind to you again—except myself,' he might have added.

The wedding-day was fixed, the day to which Harriet looked forward with triumph, and also with an agony of terror. Anything was better than this suspense, this living in hourly dread of detection, yet supposing she should be found out at the last moment? And not for her were any

of the little vanities of a bride, she could not even buy a trousseau. Mr. Marsden took good care that his children should be as dependent upon him as possible, and at this moment all that Harriet possessed in the world out of her meagre allowance was just four shillings and sixpence.

She was forced to take Mrs. Wendron into her confidence. The old lady had received her son's future wife with open arms. That the daughter of a High-Church parson should consent to marry her son and go to chapel for the rest of her life, seemed a victory of truth over error.

And then Harriet had begged her so sweetly still to remain mistress of the farmhouse. Harriet had no taste for domestic drudgery, and she trusted that old Mrs.

Wendron would look after the poultry and butter and cream, and make the jams and pickles, and do all the other uninteresting things which she supposed a farmer's wife was expected to do.

Mrs. Wendron was delighted.

'I shall be able to have the minister to dinner on Sundays the same as ever,' she thought, complacently: 'and though Miss Marsden is a very nice young lady, with not a bit of pride about her, still I can't expect her to understand the dairy or the bread-making, or to look after Robert's little comforts as I have been used to do.'

The old lady tried to comfort her when the bride-elect bitterly bewailed her inability to buy even a wedding-gown.

'Never mind, my dear, Robert will never think anything about it; and you can get

everything you want by-and-by, after you are married.'

Money was far more plentiful at Radford Farm than it was at St. Stephen's Vicarage; and there was abundance of homely comfort without the smallest attempt at display in the Wendrons' house. Robert's father and grandfather had been sober, thrifty, hard-working men like himself; and even in these days of agricultural depression Robert was a prosperous man. There were several reasons for this. Radford Farm was entirely a grazing one, and did not suffer in our rainy summers; cattle-disease is little known in the pure air of Dartmoor; and Robert Wendron had an excellent landlord, the Duke of Cornwall, *alias* the Prince of Wales.

Harriet felt that life was very hard upon

her. She was going to be married at last, it was true; she was going to escape from the state of tutelage in which her parents kept her, whilst at the same time they broadly hinted that she was fast becoming an old maid. But surely marriage without the congratulations and the envy of friends, without bridesmaids, orange-blossoms, or a single wedding-present, would be rather a poor affair.

Still it must be remembered that, though everything else was lacking which made a wedding delightful, she had a bride-groom, and that was something. And when Robert's dark eyes were fixed upon her, and she listened to his stormy love-making, she felt half intoxicated with a frightened delight. No, come what would, if her father and mother and all the rest of her little world looked upon her as an outcast

—as a disgrace to her family and her sex—she must and would marry Robert Wendron now.

'I think I should die of disappointment, if I did not,' she thought.

When a woman has been brought up to consider marriage as the sole end and object of her creation—when all wishes, ambitious, interests which tend in any other direction have been carefully stifled, and when natural instincts have been stimulated into abnormal growth—is she to be blamed if she gratifies those instincts in any way not positively unlawful?

The fatal morning dawned; and Harriet arose, after a sleepless night, trembling and shivering with agitation. Her plans were all well laid, but at any moment they might fail through some trivial accident.

When the housemaid knocked at her door that morning, with the customary can of hot water, Harriet answered, in a voice of suffering,

'I have a bad headache, I shall not come down to breakfast.'

By this means she hoped to gain an hour or two, before it was discovered that she had left the house. Harriet sometimes suffered from the prosaic but painful malady of sick-headaches; and, on these occasions, she was charitably left in peace.

She crept softly about when she dressed, fearing lest her sisters in the next room should hear her. On the night before, she had secreted in her bed-room a small, black travelling bag, which she had packed with a few toilet necessaries and all her humble trinkets—a gold chain and locket, some bangles, and a brooch or

two—thinking, with a little mortification as she took them from the Japanese lacquer-box in which they were accustomed to repose, that her lover had given her no betrothal ring, no present of any kind but a handsomely-bound copy of Wesley's hymns.

The poor, lonely bride arrayed herself in a white cashmere gown, clean, but alas! no longer new, but somewhat frayed and discoloured; and her last summer's hat, with the lace on it a little limp, and the white ostrich feathers a little out of curl. Far better would she have looked in her dark, every-day gown and bonnet, but she considered that white of some sort was *de rigueur* for a bride. Then she gazed forlornly at herself in the looking-glass. Her once plump, rosy cheeks had grown thin and pale during the fever of the last

few weeks, her eyes were not so bright as they used to be; she looked worried, anxious, and shabby.

'I don't seem much like a bride,' she sighed. 'It is all so very different from what I thought it would have been years ago.'

She waited, listening, hardly breathing, as she heard first her father go downstairs and peal a bell, long and loudly, for prayers; then her mother and sisters follow, and lastly Clive, who, being a bad sleeper, was generally late, and consequently in the habit of being rated bitterly by Mr. Marsden. The dining-room door was heard to shut, then Harriet crept out of her bed-room, her black bag in her hand, and her grey waterproof cloak hiding her tell-tale white gown,

A muffled, sonorous sound from below

assured her that the vicar was, as usual at that hour, gabbling through the morning service, with his family and his servants kneeling about the room. Harriet had just one quarter-of-an-hour of safety before her, but she stood on the landing trembling, her heart beating as though it would choke her.

'Oh, I don't think I *can* do it. I have not strength enough even to go downstairs.'

But at that moment there flashed before her a vision of Robert's face, white and dangerous as she knew that face could look, and she remembered a dreadful threat he had made the day before—he had intended it probably as a bitter tonic to keep up her strength:

'If you don't come to meet me at nine o'clock to-morrow morning sharp, as sure

as I stand here, Harriet, I will go to your father's house to fetch you.'

Between two fires, she began to crawl downstairs, step by step, and of course every stair, with the 'natural perversity of inanimate matter,' creaked loudly as she put her foot on it. The vicar's voice grew louder as she descended, and she heard him read, as with an ominous and fearful meaning, a verse from the psalm appointed for that morning's prayer.

'Like as the smoke vanisheth, so shalt thou drive them away, and like as wax melteth at the fire, so let the ungodly perish.'

She stood opposite the dining-room door for a moment or two, as if she were incapable of moving. It seemed to her as if that door must open, and she should

stand exposed to the amazement of the vicar and his domestic congregation.

Then the hall-clock, in its severe and ecclesiastical looking case of unpolished oak, began to chime the quarters. It was nine o'clock.

'Robert will come for me if I am late,' she thought, freezing with terror, as if death instead of a bridegroom was on his way to claim her. It was now or never—she must rush across the hall while the clock was striking, its sonorous tones would drown all sounds of her escape.

She hardly knew how her trembling fingers opened the hall door, and closed it again. But she was out at last—out into a thick white autumnal fog, which made her shiver with its chill and clammy touch. The brown and yellow leaves were saturat-

ed with moisture, little shining beads hung on the branches and dripped from time to time with a melancholy patter. All distant sounds were stilled, and only a few yards of road before her were visible. Harriet was thankful for this shroud of mist, she surely should be safely hidden in it; and she remembered how the convicts at the Dartmoor prison, not many miles away, sometimes escaped in fogs like this, but always—always to be retaken.

As this gloomy thought crossed her mind, she heard heavy footsteps coming along the lane. For an instant she was paralysed; she could not tell whether the footsteps were before her or behind her, whether they were of friend or foe. There was in sight no friendly gate by which she could escape and hide herself in a field; she could only stand still to

be met, or to be overtaken—which was it?

A tall, dark, manly figure loomed through the fog; the next moment Robert Wendron stood before her—Robert all spick and span and radiant, in a new brown velveteen coat, and a yellow rose in his buttonhole. Harriet uttered a little cry, half-joy, half-terror.

'I was coming to the vicarage for you, as I vowed I would!' he exclaimed, triumphantly, 'I was coming straight into the jaws of the lion! It's a good job for you I met you when I did!'

In the rapture of relief from her fears, yet shuddering as she thought of the peril she had so narrowly escaped, Harriet felt that she really adored this dare-devil bridegroom of hers, who was quite capable of walking into her father's house, and

demanding her as his lawful property.

'Were you really coming for me, Robert?' she asked, lovingly.

'To be sure I was! What do I care for the parson? You have kept me waiting a quarter-of-an-hour as it is, my lady; and I wasn't going to stand any more nonsense.'

So they went on together, Harriet submitting to Robert's putting his arm round her waist, as though she were one of the village maidens whom he ought to have won for his bride. Presently the white-washed, barn-like Bethesda became visible through the fog. A little group of men and women in their Sunday best were standing in the road just outside the chapel door, one or two farm-labourers, and half-a-dozen children, who ought to have been safe in school, looked on, aware

that something unusual was going to happen.

As the bride and bridegroom approached, there was a little murmur in the crowd—then old Mrs. Wendron, in a rustling black silk gown and white China crape shawl, detached herself from the rest, and came forward with a smiling face and outstretched hands.

'We were getting quite nervous about you, my dear; but Robert he said he'd get you out from the vicarage come what would—well, 'tis all right now, all the friends are here and the minister is waiting. Here, Mr. Willworthy, you give your arm to the bride, and, Robert, you are to walk with me, you know.'

Here a middle-aged farmer with a weather-beaten face, looking very bashful and awkward, came forward and poked

his elbow at the bride. Harriet managed to get rid somehow of her waterproof cloak, and painfully conscious that she looked but a poor figure in her old white gown, and the feathers in her hat quite out of curl from the moisture of that foggy morning. She just touched Mr. Willworthy's arm with the tips of her fingers, and entered the chapel.

For it had come to this—the eldest daughter of that Anglican priest, the Reverend Philip Marsden, was going to be married in the Methodist Bethesda in his own parish, under his own eyes. Harriet had tried to coax Robert into spending the regulation fortnight at Tavistock or Launceston, so that they might be married at a safe and decent distance from St. Stephen's vicarage. But he was obdurate.

'Why in the world should I leave the farm when there's ploughing and a lot of other work to see after? You may take your choice, Harriet: either be married at our chapel, or have the banns put up at your father's church. One of the two it's bound to be. You can't leave St. Stephen's and I won't, till we can go together.'

The audacity of the thing appalled Harriet, and made her feel guilty of a crime, as she entered the humble building with its white-washed walls, and pews and galleries of painted deal. An elderly, rather sour-faced man, in a black coat and clumsy white tie, was awaiting the company in a sort of large pew in which was a wooden table. Robert was already standing in the pew facing the minister, Harriet was led by Mr. Willworthy to his side, and the rest of the party ranged

themselves a little in the background.

Harriet had never been inside a Dissenting chapel before, and she wondered what schismatic and unhallowed words were about to be spoken by that old minister in his shabby black coat. But soon the familiar 'Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here—' spoken in a strong West-country accent sounded in her ears, and portions of the marriage service of the Church of England followed. In a few minutes more Robert had placed the ring on her finger, and they were pronounced 'Man and wife together.' Such a sense of relief and safety then rushed over Harriet, she felt delivered from some deadly peril; she heard little of the prayers or of the hymn sung afterwards by quavering voices, everything seemed dim and far away; she was conscious only that Robert Wendron

was her husband, and had a legal right to protect her against her father and mother and all the rest of the world.

There was a great hand-shaking and signing of names afterwards in the tiny vestry, and Robert gave Harriet one boisterous kiss before them all, which overwhelmed her with shame and confusion. Then they sallied forth again into the fog.

A little crowd of villagers had collected round the chapel door, and there was a cry of 'Wish you good luck, Mr. Wendron!' 'Health and happiness to you!' But no one ventured to utter a good wish for Harriet, and, when the bridal-party had walked on, an old woman muttered to another,

'He's a proper fool is Farmer Wendron, to go marrying a useless young woman

like that, as calls herself a lady, where there's a many girls of his own sort, a deal smarter than that poor-looking thing, and with a bit of money too, as would have had him, and made him a good wife.'

'And that's more than she'll ever do, a parson's daughter and all, and her father so full of idolatries as he is. Farmer Wendron can't expect no blessing on the job he's done to-day.'

Self-willed as Robert was, he had yielded to his bride in one particular. He would not oblige her to remain to the wedding-feast which old Mrs. Wendron was going to give to the minister and the rest of her friends, but he had promised to start with her by the next train to Plymouth, where they were going to spend a few days' honeymoon. Harriet was haunted by the

fear that her father would burst into the farm-house, and denounce her and all the Dissenting company. There was just time for her to change her white gown for a dark winter one and bonnet to match, which several days ago she had stealthily, and with some difficulty, conveyed to the farm-house; then, with Robert driving her in his two-wheeled dog-cart, she was soon bowling swiftly down the hill to the railway station.

They were only just in time; the train was signalled. In a few minutes more, Harriet sprang into an empty second-class carriage as a welcome shelter from the surprised and significant glances of the railway officials, Robert followed her, with two return tickets for Plymouth in his hand.

The guard shut the door, the train

moved out of the station; then Robert clasped his wife in his arms and said,

'There, I've got you at last, my lady, and a pretty tough job it has been. I reckon, if you hadn't been just a little bit more frightened of me than you are of your father, I should never have got you at all. But you are my wife now, and I am going to be very good to you, and never frighten you any more.'

CHAPTER XII.

A RETURNED LETTER.

HARRIET never knew how near she had been to discovery. The Reverend Philip Marsden went out that morning without his breakfast, because he was about to visit a sick parishioner, and to hold a service at his bedside. He passed the chapel on his way home, noticed the open doorway, and the children hanging about the threshold. A few uncertain voices were singing a hymn, and he was half inclined to cross himself, such a foul atmo-

sphere of schism seemed wafted through the open doorway; then he hastened on, and forgot all about it.

As he entered the vicarage, Janet met him in the hall with a white, scared face.

'Papa, will you go to mamma, please; she is in her bed-room. We have heard bad news this morning since you went out —something dreadful, *most* dreadful has happened,' she said, in a broken voice.

Mr. Marsden shrugged his shoulders and went upstairs reluctantly. These women always exaggerated everything—'bad news,' yes, he knew very well what that meant, the cook had given warning probably—'something dreadful had happened,' yes, some chimney had caught fire, or perhaps Master Clive had one of his numerous headaches—and, by-the-by, what did

Harriet mean that morning by copying her brother's bad example, and lying in bed? He must, as head of the household, exert his authority and put a stop to this kind of thing, this fancied invalidism.

By this time he had entered his bedroom. Mrs. Marsden lay upon a sofa, her handkerchief up to her eyes, a letter crushed in her hand, ether, sal-volatile, and an open prayer book were on a little table by her side.

'Philip,' she began, in a sepulchral voice, 'a frightful calamity has befallen us, and we have need of your prayers. Our eldest daughter Harriet, who ought to have set an example to her younger sisters, has brought shame and dishonour upon us all.'

Mrs Marsden paused to sob, and press her handkerchief to her eyes. Her hus-

band looked upon her a little coldly and absently. 'The imagination of a woman is a distorting medium for facts,' he thought.

'Well, my dear,' he said aloud, 'explain yourself if you can. I may remind you that, through performing my duty as a priest, I have as yet had no breakfast.'

'I can hardly bear to tell you,' sobbed his wife. 'Harriet has eloped! gone to be secretly married to a low disreputable person in this parish, a common farmer, a dissenter, that abominable man Wendron at Radford Farm. Janet went to her room after breakfast, found her gone! She must have crept out of the house whilst we were at prayers. Oh, the shameless deceit of it all! We found the letter, this cruel heartless letter—read it, Philip,

read it!' and Mrs. Marsden became almost hysterical.

Mr. Marsden took the letter which his wife held out to him with her eyes averted. He had grown very pale, but he did not speak a word until he had read the composition which had been prepared by Harriet with great care.

'Dear Mamma,

'You have always told us that a woman's first duties were domestic ones, and that you brought us up with a view to our becoming good wives and mothers. I have never disagreed with you, as I am sure you will say, but I saw no prospect of my doing as you wished. Time is going on, Lina has come out, and I feel I might be in my sisters' way if I

remain at home, besides missing my natural vocation. So I have decided to accept the only offer of marriage which I have ever had. I know that you and papa would never give your consent, so with much grief at vexing you for doing what you will disapprove, I have gone this morning to be quietly married at Bethesda chapel to Mr. Wendron of Radford Farm. Of course I know he is not of my own rank in life, and he is not at all the sort of man I should have married if I could have had my choice. But I could not bear the idea of living on at home until people began to say about me the things they always say about old maids. I trust that you and papa will forgive me, and will soon come to feel that I have done a sensible thing.

'Your affectionate daughter, 'HARRIET.'

There is an old story of a man who was noted for the frightful language he used when he was irritated. But one day, when some boys, with a wicked spirit of research into the ingenuity and variety of the blasphemies of which he was capable, played upon this sinner an acutely aggravating practical joke, he disappointed their curiosity by profound silence, broken only by the words, 'I can't do justice to it.'

So the vicar of St. Stephen's read the epistle, in which his daughter informed him that she had eloped with a farmer of the Methodist persuasion—the vicar read it without a word or an exclamation. He carefully folded up the letter and put it into his pocket, then he turned to leave the room.

'Oh, Philip!' cried Mrs. Marsden, 'what *are* we to do?'

'Do!' he repeated, looking back at her with a ghastly smile. 'Do! why, nothing, of course, what is there to be done? Except that I mean to return this letter of your daughter's, under cover to——' he hesitated as if he could hardly bring himself to pronounce the name, 'to Mr. Wendron. I can tell you what you are *not* to do, you and your other daughters are to hold no communication whatever with Harriet, and you are never to mention her name again in my presence.'

Then Mr. Marsden went downstairs and had his breakfast.

Janet returned to her mother's room, feeling that now she was really the eldest daughter, and must be the hope and mainstay of her afflicted family. The mother and daughter wept together.

'How could she—how *could* she do it?

So deceitful, so improper, so unladylike! What will people say? Nobody will visit us, it will be the most dreadful thing for you and Lina, quite injure your prospects——'

'Oh, pray don't trouble yourselves about my prospects,' said Lina, entering the room. 'I don't suppose my having a sister married to a Methodist farmer will prevent my being a teacher in a High school.'

'Lina, you will break my heart!' shrieked her mother: 'is it not enough that Harriet has disgraced herself?'

'*Que voulez-vous*,' answered Lina, with a shrug of her graceful shoulders. 'Why blame poor Harriet, mother, who, instead of being strong-minded, as you say I am, in wishing to be independent—why blame poor Harriet for trying to fulfil her wo-

man's destiny in the only way open to her?'

'I am horrified at you, Lina,' replied Mrs. Marsden, severely. 'Of course Harriet might have made an excellent match some day, if she had chosen.'

Janet involuntarily sighed.

'I don't see there is much chance of that for any of us. And really, mamma, Mr. Wendron may not be so very bad after all. He is a very good-looking man. And of course as he is so much beneath Harriet in every way, he will be very proud of her and respectful to her, and let her have her own way in everything. She will have a house of her own, at all events;' and again Janet gave a wistful sigh.

'My dear Janet! He is a Dissenter!' cried Mrs. Marsden. 'A low, vulgar Dissenter! How can Harriet be happy

with him? I must tell you that your papa, as a clergyman, has strictly forbidden us ever to speak to Harriet again, or even to mention her name to him. Of course if I find out that Harriet is very wretched, as I am sure she will be, or in want of the common necessaries of life in that miserable old farm-house, I shall do what I can to help her in a quiet way.'

Clive Marsden, who, like his father, said very little when he was most strongly moved, sat alone in the dining-room, sketching a design for a mantelpiece border, with an angry and impatient energy. When his sisters joined him, and Janet began another tearful lamentation over Harriet, Clive stopped her abruptly.

'Don't let us talk about it. I have

never seen the man, that I am aware of, but I have not the slightest doubt that he eats with his knife, and has a bath at long intervals. Bah! That a sister of mine should so degrade herself! No, don't let us talk tbout it. I feel degraded myself.'

Clive had some belief in that curious masculine myth, which would make even him, a boy of eighteen, responsible for the conduct of a sister ten years his senior.

Here Mr. Marsden came into the room and began walking up and down without speaking, in a gloomy monotony of creaking boots, which made his son grind his teeth. Why—oh why, if the vicar wished for a constitutional of this sort, why did he not take it in his own study? why must he come into the dining-room—

the common sitting-room of the family in the morning—to drive them all wild?

But up and down, up and down creaked Mr. Marsden for about twenty minutes, nobody venturing to speak to him; at last he stood still, and said, in a cold and bitter voice,

'I wish no discussion, no gossip about what has happened this morning. I look upon your eldest sister as simply dead and buried. But this I have to say—I feel that you have, all of you, been allowed to go on in much too lax and self-indulgent a manner. At least, I have no particular fault to find with you, Janet; I don't suppose'—and he could not resist a sneer—'you will ever be tempted by any man to follow your sister Harriet's example, and when your parents are dead, and have no further need of you, you can go into

a sisterhood. It is you two younger ones I am more particularly addressing; it is you who stand in need of much stricter discipline.'

Mr. Marsden had a peculiar talent for expressing himself in an irritating manner, and, like many other parents, he was an adept in the art of 'provoking his children to wrath.' But Lina merely held her head a little higher, and compressed her lips together, while Clive reddened and kicked the table, but went on drawing, and tried to appear as though he was not listening.

'I shall have to place two alternatives before you, Clive. If you persist in throwing away all your chances of going to Oxford, because you fancy that reading any books except novels makes your head ache—then the only thing you can do is to come down a little in the social scale.

I shall get you a clerkship of some sort, where you will have nothing to do but to sit upon a high stool from morning till night and copy letters, and that sort of work, which will not tax even your feeble brain. I have not the slightest intention of supporting you in idleness much longer. At your age a young fellow ought to be doing something in the world, instead of moping about the house and doing a sort of fancy work, and conducting himself generally like a hysterical member of the feebler sex.'

Clive made no reply: he was in the habit of putting a strong control upon himself when his father appeared to deliberately try to irritate him—a control for which he often paid dearly afterwards by throbbing brain and palpitating heart, and a sense of his nervous system being strained all over.

Mr. Marsden resumed his walk up and down the room for some minutes. Perhaps he was considering whether Lina was worth his notice; at last he gave her a slight, contemptuous glance, and said:

'Let me recommend you, Lina, to put aside all your conceited and unbecoming notions. No daughter of mine shall ever quit the shelter of her home to follow an independent course. It is enough that one member of the family has disgraced herself; once for all, Lina, I request you to leave alone studies which you have the gross presumption to imagine you undertand. My heaviest displeasure will rest upon you if I ever again see you with a Greek or Latin author in your hand.'

And then, with the complacency which comes from duty well performed, the vicar

went back to his study to read one of the Fathers.

That day week, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wendron returned from their brief wedding journey. Harriet, looking very happy and quite handsome, with a bright colour on her cheeks, drove up the hill beside her husband, triumphant in the thought that she was coming, a bride, to her own home, farm-house though it was, and feeling that it was very pleasant to have a carriage to drive in, even though it was nothing but a two-wheeled dog-cart.

Robert drove into the farmyard, stopped at the granite porch, sprang out, and helped his wife down with a fond, protecting air, as though he liked an excuse for putting his arms round her. Old Mrs. Wendron came to the door to meet them with a beaming face, and Harriet, who really liked

her mother-in-law, kissed her heartily; and so, a cheerful trio, talking and laughing and asking a number of questions, they went into the farm-house parlour, which looked the very home of comfort. A great fire blazed on the hearth, and lighted up, with a ruddy glow, the gathering gloom of the October evening. A white damask cloth was spread on the table, the best pink china tea-cups gleamed, there was a great home-cured ham, a glass bowl of Devonshire junket, cakes, cream, and other good things.

'Let me take you upstairs to your room, my dear, you have not seen it yet. There's a letter or two for you, Robert, on the bureau there—' and so Mrs. Marsden took Harriet upstairs into the spacious bedroom with casement windows curtained with white dimity, chairs and sofas and an

immense four-post bed, of massive mahogany, hung with large flowered chintz; there was a faint smell of lavender, and everything was fresh, clean, and old-world.

'Oh, how delightful! what a charming old room!' cried Harriet, in raptures with the quaint shield-shaped looking-glass, with the bright brass handles of the chests of drawers, with the antique blue of the toilet ware, the wonderful samplers in black frames, the old Staffordshire delft figures on the high mantelshelf—in raptures with everything.

'My dear, I do hope you will be happy, in your new home,' said Mrs. Wendron, delighted with Harriet's delight. 'It is all very plain and homely, I know, after what you have been used to.'

'I am sure I shall be happy. Robert

has been awfully kind to me since we have been away—ever so much kinder than I thought he could be,' replied Harriet, naively. 'And I am so glad you are going to live with us.'

'It is very good of you to say so, my dear. I should have felt it hard to leave my old home, and Robert has always been a good son to me, only you know, my dear—' the mother hesitated a little—'Robert will have his own way. I've never crossed him in anything great or small, and so we've always got on together.'

Harriet's face fell a little; were these the only terms on which one could continue to live happily with Robert? Her mother-in-law evidently thought she was giving the bride some valuable hints; and there was no one to retort upon the old lady, 'You have spoiled your son from his child-

hood, and the wife may have to suffer for the mother's fault.'

To be sure, Robert was masterful, thought Harriet, she had known that from the first; in his inferior social position, he would never have won her if he had not been. She liked a man to be strong, even a little rough and overbearing (in theory). But it was quite another thing to have to give up all one's own wishes, to have to yield in everything, for a lifetime.

However, Harriet tried to forget this slight shadow of annoyance which Mrs. Wendron had cast upon her. She took off her bonnet, and arranged her glossy black hair: and presently she went downstairs in a new gown of grey velveteen with a knot of crimson ribbon at her throat, one of the various purchases she

had made at Plymouth. She went downstairs smiling complacently; as she crossed the narrow stone-paved entrance hall, she heard Robert call to her from a small room he had named his 'den.'

'Harriet, come here!' he said, in a voice she had never heard him speak before.

Startled, she went in. Her husband was standing at the table, an open letter spread before him, his clenched fist resting on it. There was a candle on the table which cast a faint light on the dusky walls, on the old-fashioned bureau littered with papers, and on the guns and riding-whips ranged over the mantelpiece. As Harriet entered the room, he looked up, and confronted her with a face which perfectly terrified her.

'There,' and he struck the letter with

his fist, 'there's a pretty sort of letter for you to write about your husband!'

'What letter!' she gasped, 'I don't know what you mean.'

'This—this letter,' he thundered, 'that you wrote to your mother about me! The parson has sent it back again.'

Harriet saw it all then—saw the letter she had left in her bed-room on the morning she had gone to be married—saw it in her husband's hand.

'Oh, Robert,' she said, turning sick and faint as she realized the deadly blow which her father had given her. 'Robert, I never meant you to see that letter.'

'No, I'll be bound you didn't,' he answered, fiercely. 'Here, look here!' and he held the letter up with one hand

and struck it with the other, 'you say I am not at all the sort of man you would have married if you could have had yonr choice;' and he looked at his wife as if he were ready to strike her, for she had wounded him in one of his most vulnerable points, his vanity.

'I didn't mean it!' she cried, in anguish, 'it was not true!'

'Oh, you put lies in your letters, do you? But I'll tell you what—whether I am the sort of man you wanted to marry or not, I am your husband now, and your master too, and you shan't deceive me, I can tell you!' and he almost choked with rage.

'Robert—Robert!' she sobbed, 'I don't deceive you, I do love you, I love you dearly.'

'It looks so like your loving me, doesn't

it?' and he put the letter down on the table again, and stood frowning at it, with his hands thrust into his pockets. 'You say in plain words, without mincing the matter, that you married me just because you didn't want to be an old maid;' and he gave a short, savage laugh.

'Oh, what can I do—what can I do to make you understand?' she cried, overwhelmed with shame. 'I wrote that letter just to try to satisfy mamma, to make her feel that I had done a sensible thing, which would please her by-and-by, when she had got over being angry with me. What was the good of telling her the truth—that I really—really loved you?'

Robert made no answer, he would not even look at her, but kept his eyes fixed on the letter, and Harriet began to feel she had signed her own death-warrant.

'How could papa have been so unkind to me?' she murmured; and, between her husband and her father, she began to realize, as she had never done before, something of the peculiar cruelty with which men—even those worthy of respect—are capable of treating women.

But Robert, though she did not know it, was softening towards his wife of one week. Her words, her heart-rending tone, 'I love you, I really love you!' were too genuine for him to doubt her. Still he was determined to hold out as long as he could; she must be punished for that letter, he thought, before he could forgive her.

Harriet was driven to desperation by his continued silence; she thought she saw all her happiness slipping away from her. Robert turned as if to leave the room; she

sprang after him with hands outstretched, sobbing bitterly, 'Robert—Robert, won't you forgive me?'

Then he could be obdurate no longer. He took her in his arms and kissed her. 'Yes, I forgive you, Harriet, I forgive you, my dear, but it was an uncommonly nasty letter for you to write. However, I'll say no more about it.'

After a minute or two of this bitter-sweet reconciliation, Robert said—'Look here, I'll burn the letter—' and he held it in the flame of the candle until it was consumed—'and now come with me into the parlour to tea.'

'Oh, I can't just yet,' answered Harriet, still trembling with the emotion she had gone through. 'I can't face your mother until I have bathed my eyes, what would she think? the first evening of our coming

home;' and again the poor bride shed tears.

'Very well, I'll stop here till you come downstairs again;' and Robert gave a sigh in his turn. Perhaps the bridegroom also felt the irony of the situation.

In a few minutes Harriet reappeared, and they went into the parlour, side by side in silence, and took their seats at the table, where Mrs. Wendron was impatiently awaiting them.

'Shall I make tea, Robert, or shall Harriet?' asked the old lady, pausing a little reluctantly, with her hand on the antique silver tea-pot.

'Oh, settle it between yourselves,' was Robert's brusque reply, as he threw himself back in his chair, with a look which meant, 'Don't you women bother me about your domestic affairs.'

Harriet answered meekly, yet with a firm resolution which she had made from the first day of her engagement, that Mrs. Wendron senior should do all the housekeeping that she could be made to do,

'Oh, please, dear Mrs. Wendron, do make the tea, as you have been accustomed to do it.'

'Well, my dear,' replied the old lady, with an arch complacence, 'I daresay I do know better than you how Robert likes his tea. I have had more experience, you see.'

Mrs. Wendron had plenty to say to her son about all that had happened in the poultry-yard, the dairy, and the farm generally, during his unwonted absence of a week. She did not observe that both bride and bridegroom were rather silent: that Robert looked gloomy, and Harriet

depressed, and that a sort of chill constraint had come over them both.

The fatal letter was never mentioned again; but it had done its work, and Mr. Marsden's little poisoned arrow had gone straight to the mark. Robert never forgot that his wife had written of him as if he were her useful, humble tool; she might try to explain away her words, but they aroused once more a vague suspicion which had sometimes annoyed him in the first days of their engagement. Would a young lady, a parson's daughter, want to marry him, if she could have found a husband in her own class?

And Harriet would never forget that she had been humiliated in the first hour of her entering her husband's house. Her face burned when she remembered Robert's harsh words, and how she had been

forced to humble herself before he would forgive her. An enemy had sown tares amongst their wheat—their household love and happiness.

CHAPTER XIII.

CECILIA MAKES A DISCOVERY.

Cecilia Tremayne was standing at her bed-room window, which looked over the lawn and shrubbery of the vicarage garden. The room was a haze of tender blue, like an autumnal mist—ceiling, wall-paper, doors, wainscot, mantelpiece, everything was pale blue—except a square of olive-green carpet on the oak-brown floor, and the cream-coloured linen curtains embroidered with forget-me-nots.

There were jars and vases of real Wedgewood porcelain on the dressing-table and chimney-piece; pale blue ground, soft as satin to the touch, with Flaxman's classic designs in low relief. There were two or three delicate brown engravings by Bartolozzi in oval frames; women with sweet, serene faces, and the picturesque mob-caps and kerchiefs of the last century. All this spoke of Cecilia's refined, artistic taste, and peculiar liking for what was graceful and a little quaint. Two photographs hung over the fireplace which bore witness to the other very different side of Cecilia's nature. One was a portrait of Joseph Mazzini, the other of Michael Davitt.

Life had seemed very flat to Cecilia since that afternoon she had spent at Morwell Lodge, in the company of Mau-

rice O'Donovan. She had had one brief glimpse of the world in which she longed to live—the world of secret politics, of struggle for a proscribed cause, of fighting for a people's liberty against a strong and despotic government.

Cecilia was a born revolutionist; she had affinities with the noble Hungarian and Slavonic (whether Russian or Polish) women who have endured untold agonies for their country's cause; like them, she would have gone to the scaffold with a smile on her lips, or would have suffered torture rather than betray a comrade. But Cecilia was only a prosperous English lady, in a land of settled freedom; not for her was death and martyrdom, not for her even the honours of Hannah Reynolds, the first Irishwoman of our own day who was imprisoned as a political

offender; not for her were the hair-breadth escapes of that other noble girl who evaded the Dublin detectives and fled to Liverpool with the stereo-plates of the proscribed Nationalist journal in her trunks. Life was all prosaic, tame and easy to Cecilia Tremayne, and she envied the heroic sorrows of Kathleen Rivers.

Whilst thus musing sadly, and wishing she could have accompanied her friend in any humble capacity on that secret mission to Ireland, the maid-servant knocked at her door and said,

'Mrs. Rivers is in the drawing-room, if you please, ma'am.'

With a little cry of joy Cecilia ran downstairs. Mrs. Rivers was talking with Mr. Tremayne, like any other well-bred woman in London society. The double life she led, as the wife of the

English member of Parliament, and as the sister of the Irish felon, had never been more vividly realised by Cecilia than at that moment. The vicar was in total ignorance of his charming visitor's little trip to Ireland, and he imagined that she had been at Morwell Lodge ever since the garden-party a fortnight ago.

'And when does Mr. Rivers return to England?' the vicar was asking, as Cecilia entered the room.

'Next month, I think. He is in the far west, renewing his youth in a young world—so he tells me. I would be more lonely than I am,' she went on, in the most self-possessed manner, after she had greeted Cecilia, 'but my brother Mr. O'Donovan has come to spend a few weeks with me at Morwell Lodge.'

Mr. Tremayne looked rather inquiringly at Mrs. Rivers. A very Irish name, thought he—can this be one of the objectionable relations he had heard some one hint that Mrs. Rivers possessed?

'I trust I shall have the pleasure of calling on Mr. O'Donovan very shortly. I hope that, like yourself, he will be able to bear the extreme quiet, I suppose I ought not say dulness, of this place.'

'You will always have a welcome whenever you come, Mr. Tremayne. But I fear my brother will be able to go very little into society, his health is not at all strong. And, lest you may wonder at his non-appearance at church, I think I ought to tell you that he is a Catholic.'

The vicar's face brightened. He prided himself on his toleration, and always said

that the Roman Catholic religion was emphatically one for gentlemen. His contempt for the village Methodists was not bigotry—by no means, only an aristocratic scorn for things 'common and unclean.'

'Mr. O'Donovan will bring a new and pleasant element into the monotony of our lives at Morwell,' said the vicar. 'He is Irish, of course?'

'Well, he undoubtedly is,' replied Mrs. Rivers, slightly smiling.

'And the Church of Rome is therefore his national church,' Mr. Tremayne remarked, benevolently.

'Ah!' thought Cecilia, 'and is not the church of Wesley equally the church of Cornwall?'

'If you have nothing better to do this

afternoon, Cecilia, will you have tea with me?' asked Kathleen.

Cecilia started a little, and her face flushed brightly.

'I shall be ready directly,' she said, as she left the room.

A few minutes afterwards Mr. Tremayne was bowing and smiling farewell on his doorstep, and the two ladies were bowling swiftly along the drive.

'You will be surprised at our coming back to Morwell so soon,' began Kathleen, 'but my brother became quite ill in London. The very noise and confusion in the streets were more than he could bear. Cecilia, I hardly realised how broken in health and nerve he is, till I saw him—a man in the prime of life, a man naturally as brave as Sarsfield—till I saw him

shrink and look quite pale and bewildered when he tried to cross a crowded London thoroughfare; and even meeting some old friends was too much for his strength. Their wild joy over him, their wanting to fête him, and get up banquets and meetings for him—it was just killing him. I was only a few days in Ireland, when I returned to London I found him ill, unable to sleep or eat; and so I prevailed upon him to come back with me to Morwell Lodge for perfect rest and quiet, so that he may get some strength by the time Parliament meets, and our leading men return to London. Oh, Cecilia, when I see the ravages that prison life has made in him, when I think of all that he has gone through—is there any justice in Heaven or earth, I wonder?'

'Kathleen,' faltered Cecilia, hardly

knowing what to say, 'such a little while has passed since his release, he has had no time yet to recover. You must try to think of him as a soldier wounded in battle—all his sufferings have been glorious ones.'

'Ah! I don't know,' replied Kathleen, with a dark and despondent look; 'there are some sufferings which degrade even a martyr, which leave an intolerable brand of shame even on the purest and loftiest souls. Penal servitude is that, I imagine —and then to think how many of our noblest countrymen have suffered it! Ah, it would have been more merciful to put them to death—too merciful for the English government!'

'Kathleen, Kathleen, don't talk like that!' cried her friend, in anguish, 'don't make me hate my country!'

'You dear Celtic soul,' returned Kathleen, with a mournful, tender smile, 'no, I will vex you no more. I will not visit Saxon crimes on you. Well, now, Mr. Tremayne has put me in a little dilemma. In his charming courtesy and kindness of heart he will certainly call on Maurice. He would not do so, that is equally certain, if he knew that Maurice had just been released from Dartmoor prison. But, if I told Mr. Tremayne the whole truth, he would not only cut us both dead, but would request you to hold no further communication with either of us.'

'I should refuse to comply with such a request,' returned Cecilia, proudly.

'I quite believe it. But then, don't you see, that would make things very unpleasant for you at home. No, I cannot undertake the responsibility of doing what

would probably lead to a serious difference between yourself and your uncle. Well, if Mr. Tremayne pays us a visit we cannot help it. It is the Government which has placed us in this false position, not our own choice, certainly. I can only promise for my brother that he will not allow any English household (but my husband's) to be profaned by the presence of a convict. Mr. Tremayne's call will not be returned in person. I will leave Maurice's card at the vicarage,' she said, with a bitter little laugh.

They had by this time come to Morwell Lodge.

'Will you go into the drawing-room, Cecilia, whilst I drive round to the stable. I will be with you in a moment. Maurice has gone for a walk, but I expect him home soon.'

Cecilia alighted at the little garden-gate and walked up to the house. The front door stood open and she entered the hall, went to the drawing-room, and then started back, and stood on the threshold.

Maurice O'Donovan was reclining in an arm-chair, sound asleep; his thin hands resting on a newspaper, which lay open on his knees. On the floor was a confused pile of periodicals, evidently he was still pursuing his historical researches. Cecilia was struck, even more than she was at their first meeting, with the worn, exhausted look of the still youthful face. His sleep might have been death, so profound was the unconsciousness of that white, still countenance—death after torturing illness—'long disquiet merged in rest.'

As Cecilia looked at him in 'the touching helplessness of sleep,' there awoke in her the strongest instinct of a true woman —the desire to protect and cherish the ill-used and suffering; and from the mingling of this compassion with the reverence she already felt for the man who had endured everything, short of death, for the sake of his country—there suddenly leaped up in her the lightning flame of passion. She shook from head to foot; a mystic voice seemed calling to her that she had met her doom—half-blinded and bewildered, she turned and found her way out into the garden.

She stood there motionless, stunned with a new and terrible experience. Mrs. Rivers joined her presently, and said, in some surprise,

'What is the matter, Cecilia? you look quite pale and scared.'

The blood rushed back to Cecilia's face, her senses returned to her, and she answered, with her usual self-possession,

'I was a little startled by finding Mr. O'Donovan asleep in the drawing-room. I only hope I did not startle him;' and she tried to smile.

Mrs. Rivers did not smile.

'Ah, you can have no idea—I did not find it out at first—how broken down he is. Everything seems to fatigue him; when he has been reading for a little while, he constantly falls asleep like this. And yet he hardly sleeps at night, and I often hear him walking up and down his room.'

'Well, nothing can be more restful than this little house of yours.'

'I trust he finds it so. Indeed, he could get no rest in London. The truth is, Cecilia, it was not all rejoicing, not all the welcome you might have expected it to be. Or rather, it *was* all that at first, but—— Well, you remember I told you that Maurice always believed in the hopelessness of the attempted rising in '67; yet he felt bound in honour to take the part which brought upon him this awful punishment which he has suffered ever since. Would you not imagine he had suffered enough? But there are men who have given up nothing for Ireland, who have been free and prosperous while he has been in penal servitude—and they taunt *him!* They plot and scheme and dream—it may be of worse things than open warfare, and, when he implores them to give up their mad and wicked folly, they say English

prisons have done for him what English gold has done for some other Irishmen. As if a man of nearly thirty did not see more clearly than the mere boy he was when he was tried and condemned! He bore all their taunts patiently, he would not listen to me when I raved against their injustice to him—for imagine being released from an English prison only to be called a traitor by Irishmen! "These men are as patriotic as you or I," he said, "only unhappily we don't agree as to the best way of serving our country. But for my part I will have none of that distrust and denunciation of each other which have been Ireland's curse in days gone by. We are all comrades and fellow-workers; all who love our country and strive to make it free."'

'But there must be a large number of

Nationalists who would agree thoroughly with your brother.'

'Certainly. But you must remember that men have come to the front since Maurice was sent to prison to whom he is little beyond a name. And these he has not yet met. They are not in London at present, nor will they be there until Parliament meets again. Early next session I trust he will become personally acquainted with some of them—men whom he looks upon as our country's hope. Now, let us go into the drawing-room. I think, Cecilia,' and the harassed look on Kathleen's face gave place to one of her peculiarly sweet smiles, 'I think you will be a sort of Good Samaritan to Maurice, when some of his countrymen pass by on the other side. You show him just the sort of kindness that he wants—you

refresh his weary brain by the novelty of English sympathy; you save him from thinking of the unkindness of supposed friends by showing him how compassionate a supposed enemy can be.'

A strange shiver ran through Cecilia, at Mrs. Rivers' cordial, yet lightly spoken words. But she was calm, even a little cold in manner, as they entered the drawing-room, and found the ex-convict again studying his scattered heap of newspapers. His pallid face lighted up as they came in.

'You see, I have come back to Dartmoor, Miss Tremayne,' he began, gaily. 'I have not got as far as the prison *yet*. But there are plenty of people who wish me there again, and not all of them your countrymen either;' and now there was something sad in his smile. 'My kind

sister gives me a delightful resting-place on the road, and it is very kind of you, Miss Tremayne, not to refuse to be in the same room with a ticket-of-leave man.'

Cecilia had never before found it so difficult to express herself. Her 'Serene Highness' was shy and embarrassed in the presence of the ex-convict. She answered, in a low tone,

'I am honoured by being allowed to be in the same room with a real patriot. To be a patriot in England generally means wanting your country to do all sorts of aggressive and despotic things to other countries —to be a bully, in fact. In Ireland, a patriot means——'

'A felon, sometimes,' said Maurice, smiling. 'But you must know, Miss Tremayne, I am not at all a violent man. I am not a Fenian now, I am only a milk-and-

water constitutionalist, as somebody called me the other day. Considering that we are not allowed to form volunteer corps; and that you have a respectable army, and the biggest fleet in the world, I am inclined to think that the idea of fighting you was the maddest which ever entered an unhappy people's mind. It is an idea for which some of us have paid pretty dearly, however. But if we had succeeded beyond our wildest hopes—if, for instance, we had taken Dublin or Cork, so much the worse for us, a couple of English gunboats would simply have bombarded the city into ruins. I am talking treason, however; not only from an English, but from a certain Irish, point of view also. Some of my friends forget that the days are past when the walls of Jericho fell down before the mere blast of a trumpet.'

'But your leaders now are practical men not mere visionaries,' said Cecilia.

'Yes, I find that a great change has come over Ireland whilst I have been in my grave. We have at last some idea of adjusting means to ends; and the wisest of us have relinquished war for diplomacy.'

'And Ireland has found her Cavour in Charles Stuart Parnell,' Cecilia added.

Maurice did not respond; a certain shadow passed over his face, and for the first time he and Cecilia seemed out of sympathy.

'My brother would agree with your estimate of Mr. Parnell much better than with that of Count Cavour,' interposed Mrs. Rivers, quickly.

'Well, I will say this,' Maurice went on —'to liken ourselves to those Hungarians, who have met with so much sympathy in England—we are abandoning the party of

Kossuth for that of Deak, and I have faith that we will gain Home-rule as he did. I am no separatist; I might be, if I could alter natural laws, and unmoor Ireland from her present position, to anchor her a few leagues nearer the United States. As it is, give us the same right to manage our own affairs that Canada has, and in time you will find us as loyal to the English crown as Canada is. There was a day, you know, when Canadians rebelled in order to gain Home-rule; and when a price was put on the head of the man who afterwards became their Prime Minister.'

At this moment, the door opened, and a servant appeared with the tea-tray. Cecilia observed that, instead of the simple country girl who was the usual parlour maid at Morwell Lodge, they were waited

upon this afternoon by a somewhat distinguished-looking elderly woman. Her large mob-cap covered silvery hair, her plain black silk gown clad a tall and still upright and slender figure. Her delicately featured face was deadly pale, and her lips were compressed as though she was putting a strong constraint upon herself to hide some acute suffering. As she set down the tea-tray, Cecilia noticed that her hands were trembling. Just as she was about to leave the room again, her eyes met Cecilia's for one second, an inquiring, wistful, almost terrified glance shot out of the woman's eyes, then her lips began to quiver, and she went hastily away.

'I have made a change in my little household here, as you see, Cecilia. I want some one to look after Maurice, if, as

is possible, I have to go up to London for a week or two. So I have brought down my housekeeper from town. I don't think you have ever seen her before. Mr. Rivers and I brought her with us from America last year, and we think her quite a treasure, there is something so peculiarly refined and gentle about her. I must tell you that she is English by birth, though she has lived with her brother in Illinois for the last twenty years. Her name is Penrose.'

'Then she is a Cornishwoman surely,' said Cecilia.

'Well, if so, it is the more odd that she was so disinclined to come down to the west with me. I suppose she thought it would be very dull here after London. But I really feared I would have come to a quarrel with her about it, then suddenly

she changed her mind, and seemed quite eager to come. There is something a little odd about her at times, with all her excellent qualities.'

'Her face seems somehow familiar to me,' remarked Cecilia.

'Oh, I am sure she had not come when you last stayed with us in London. However, my dear Cecilia, I don't want to be inflicting upon you any more hateful gossip about servants. I suppose you have read that book, Justin M'Carthy's "History of our own Time," which Maurice says is a pearl of great price to him?'

'It is just what a man, who has been dead and buried for the last seven years, wants to read when he comes to life again,' said Maurice.

'Ah, had he indeed come back to life again?' thought his sister, gazing at him

with tender wistful eyes, seeing the look of exhaustion which was coming over his face. Even the small excitement of talking to Cecilia was almost too much for him. 'We have had enough politics for the present,' she thought; and then she said aloud,

'Cecilia, tell me, what can I do to make this room look a little more furnished. Does it not strike you, now that autumn has come, as being a little cold and bare? Indian matting and linen curtains are all very well for the summer.'

Cecilia with difficulty forced her troubled mind to attend to small matters of furniture and decoration, which at any other time she would have considered worthy her profoundest attention.

Then, when the afternoon was nearly over, and she had bid the brother and

sister good-bye, and was walking homeward along that prosaic high-road which had become to her the way to a strange and vivid world, in which she had sudden glimpses of the struggles and the passions which form the undercurrent of a nation's history—then in her ears there rang the wild words of Elaine:

'I have gone mad; I love you, let me die.'

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON: PRINTED BY DUNCAN MACDONALD, BLENHEIM HOUSE.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 042052875